MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

マルドゥック・スクランブル

6

created by
TOW UBUKATA

manga by
YOSHITOKI OIMA

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pick a card, any card

To get the four million-dollar chips in which Shell's missing memories are stored, Balot and company take on the casino at the blackjack table. But the dealer may have more tricks up his sleeve than any of them could have imagined, and suddenly the odds are stacked against them!

Includes special extras after the story!

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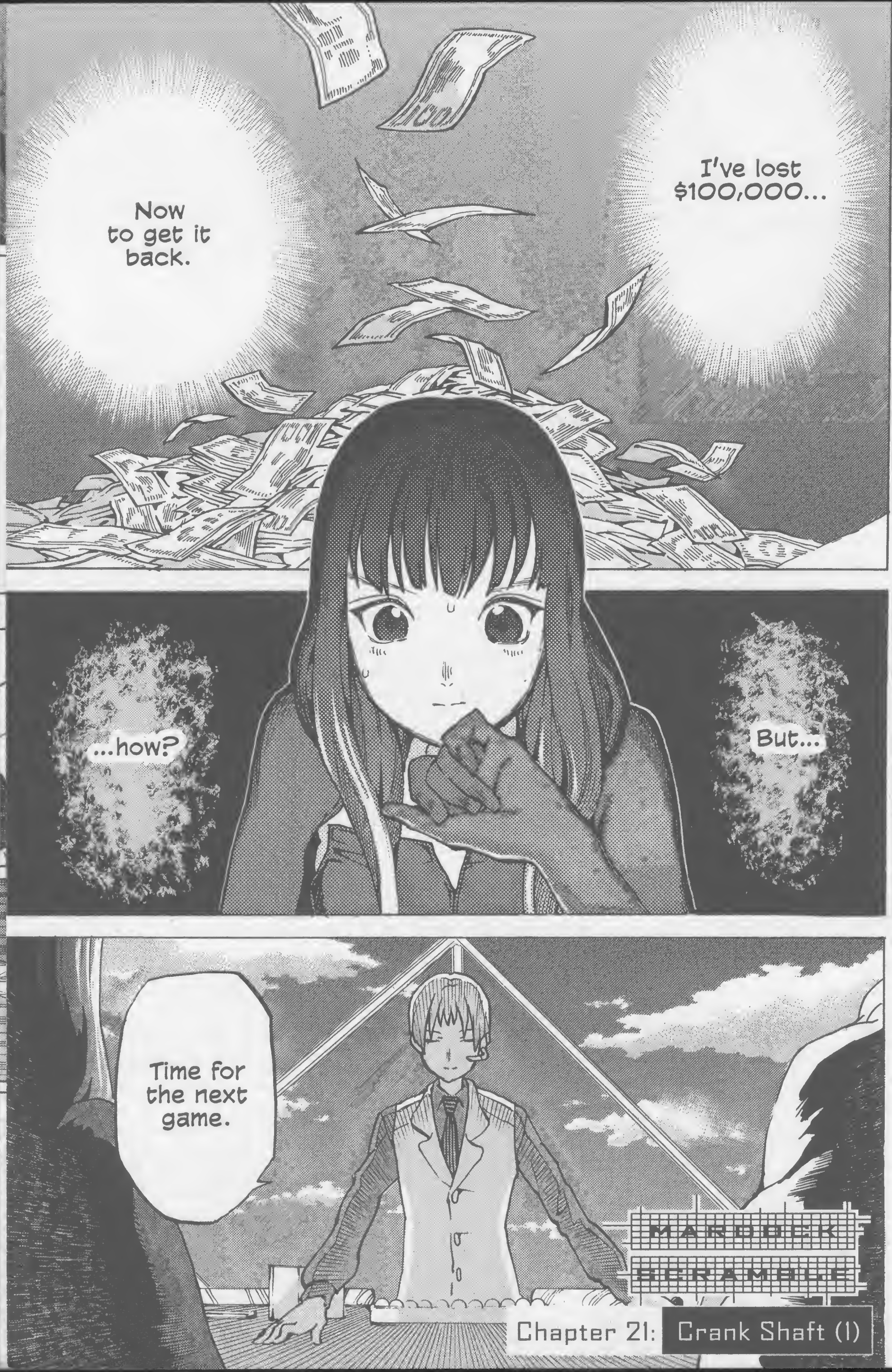
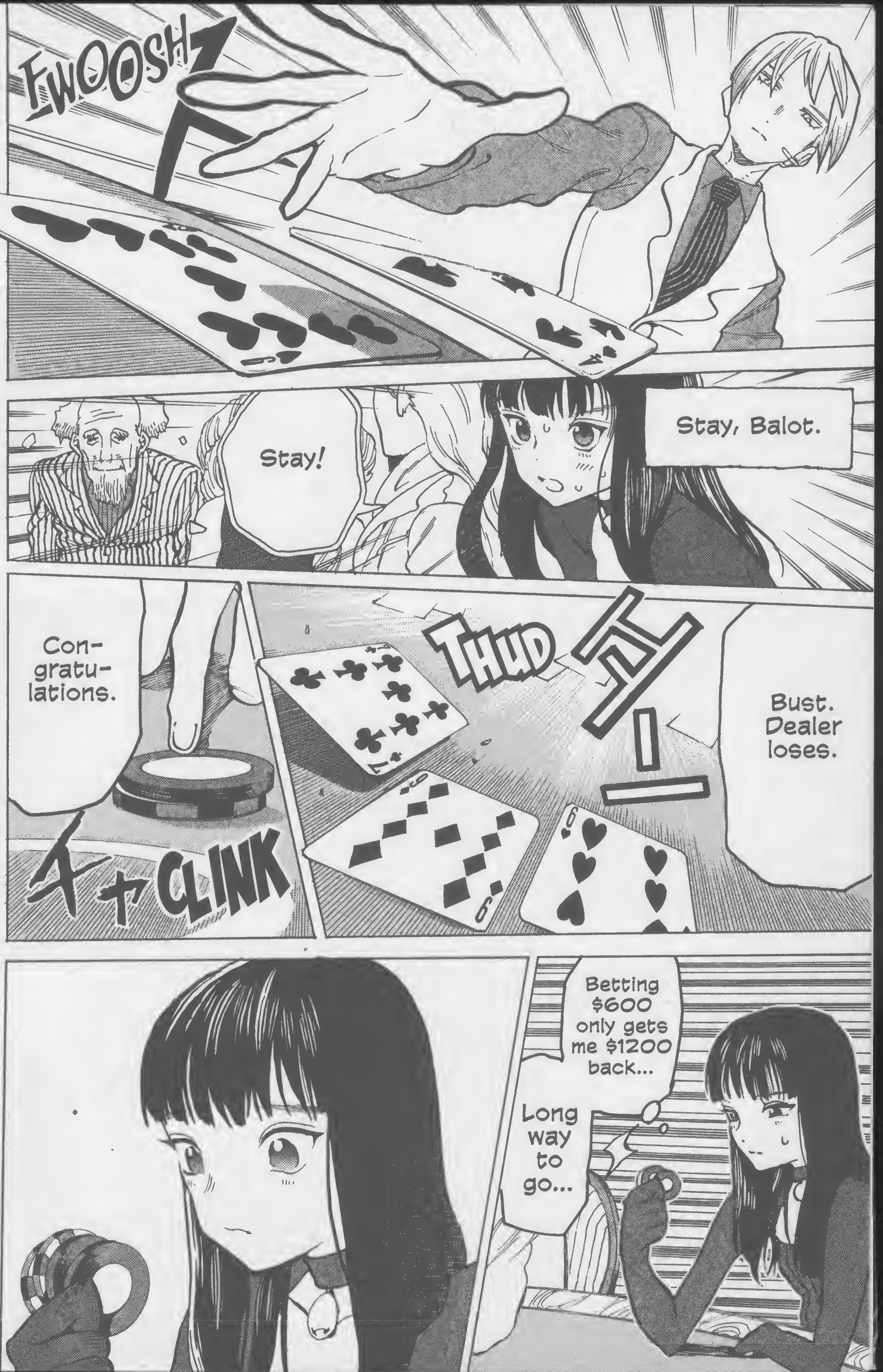
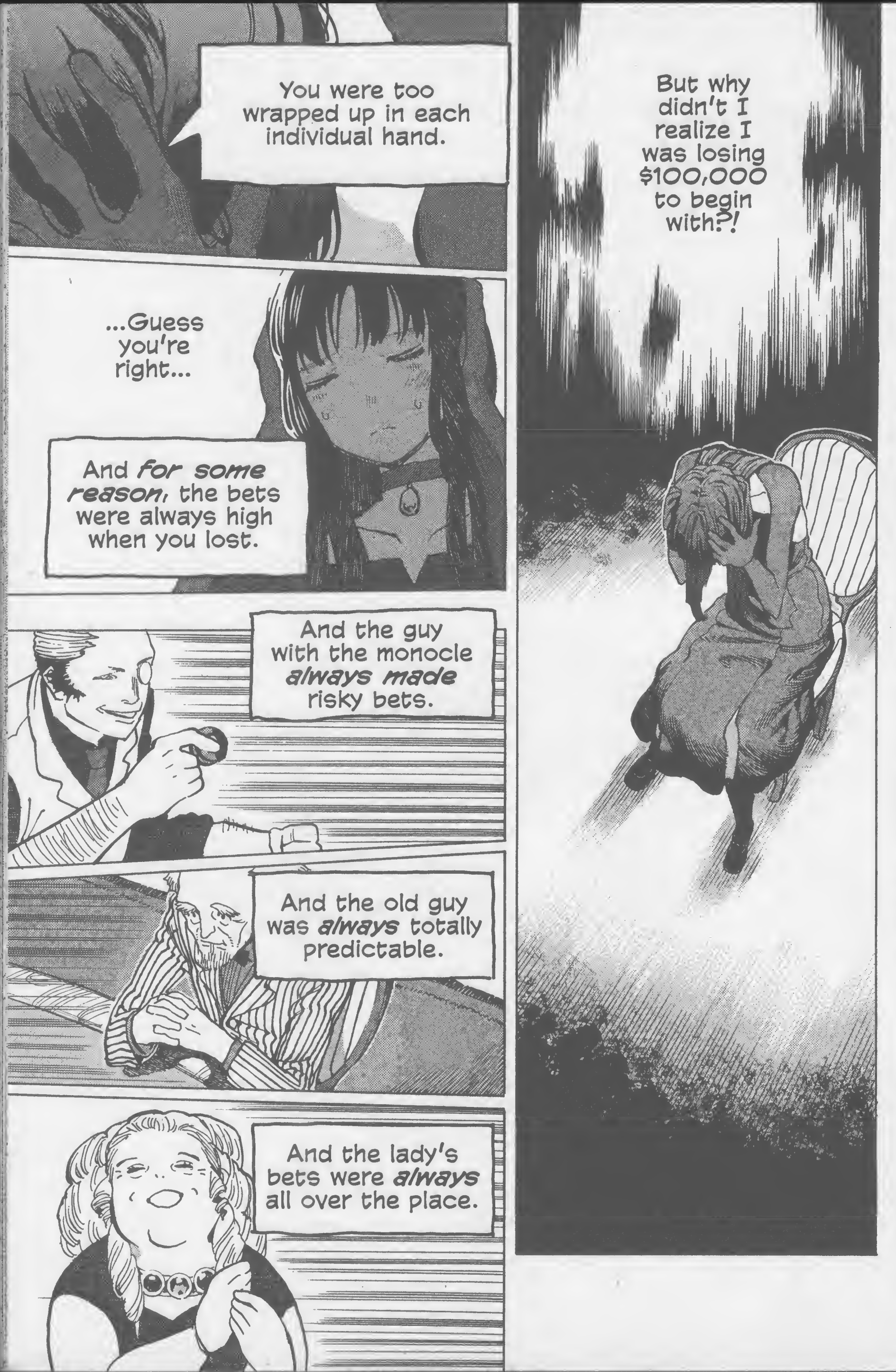
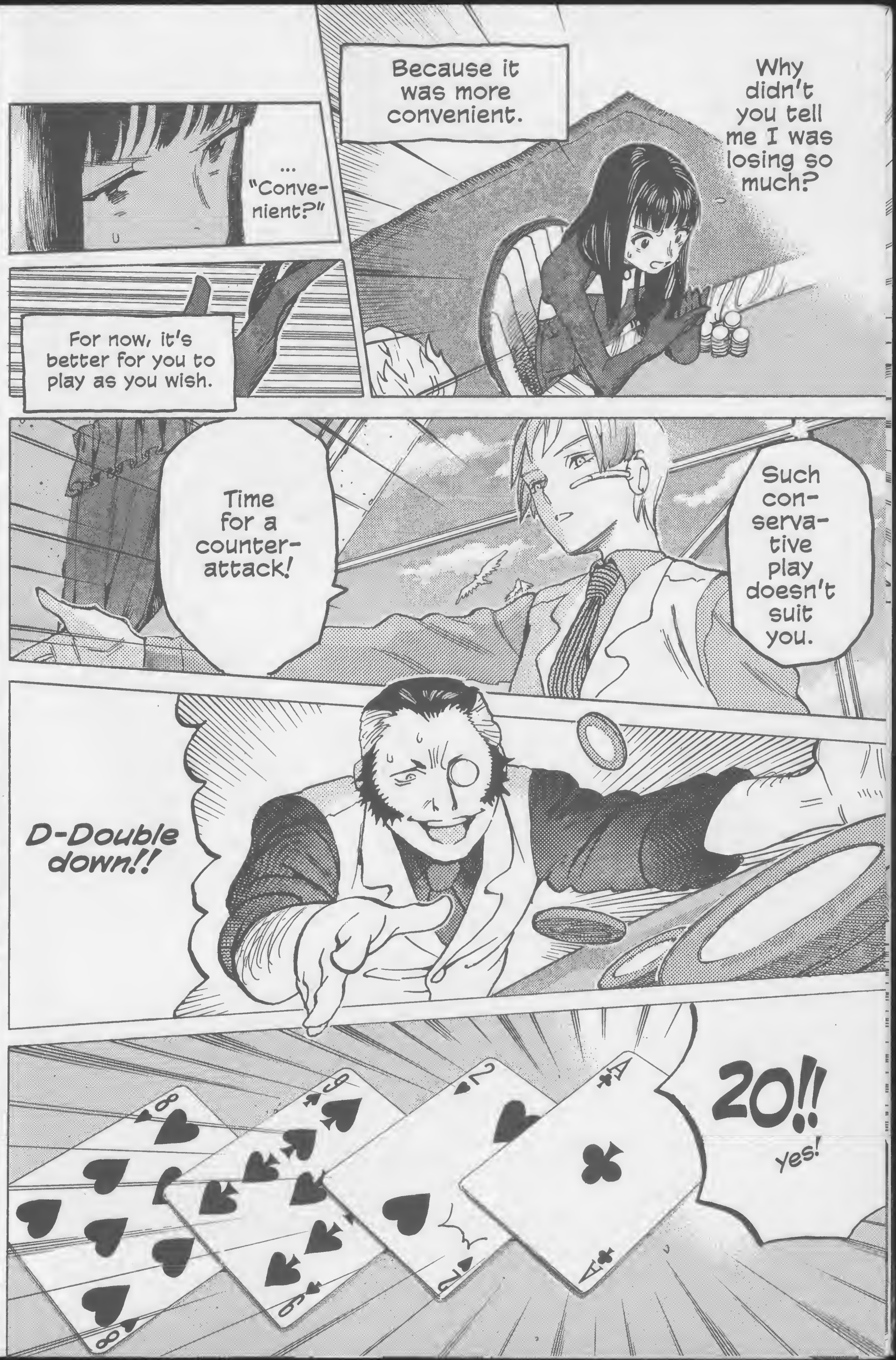


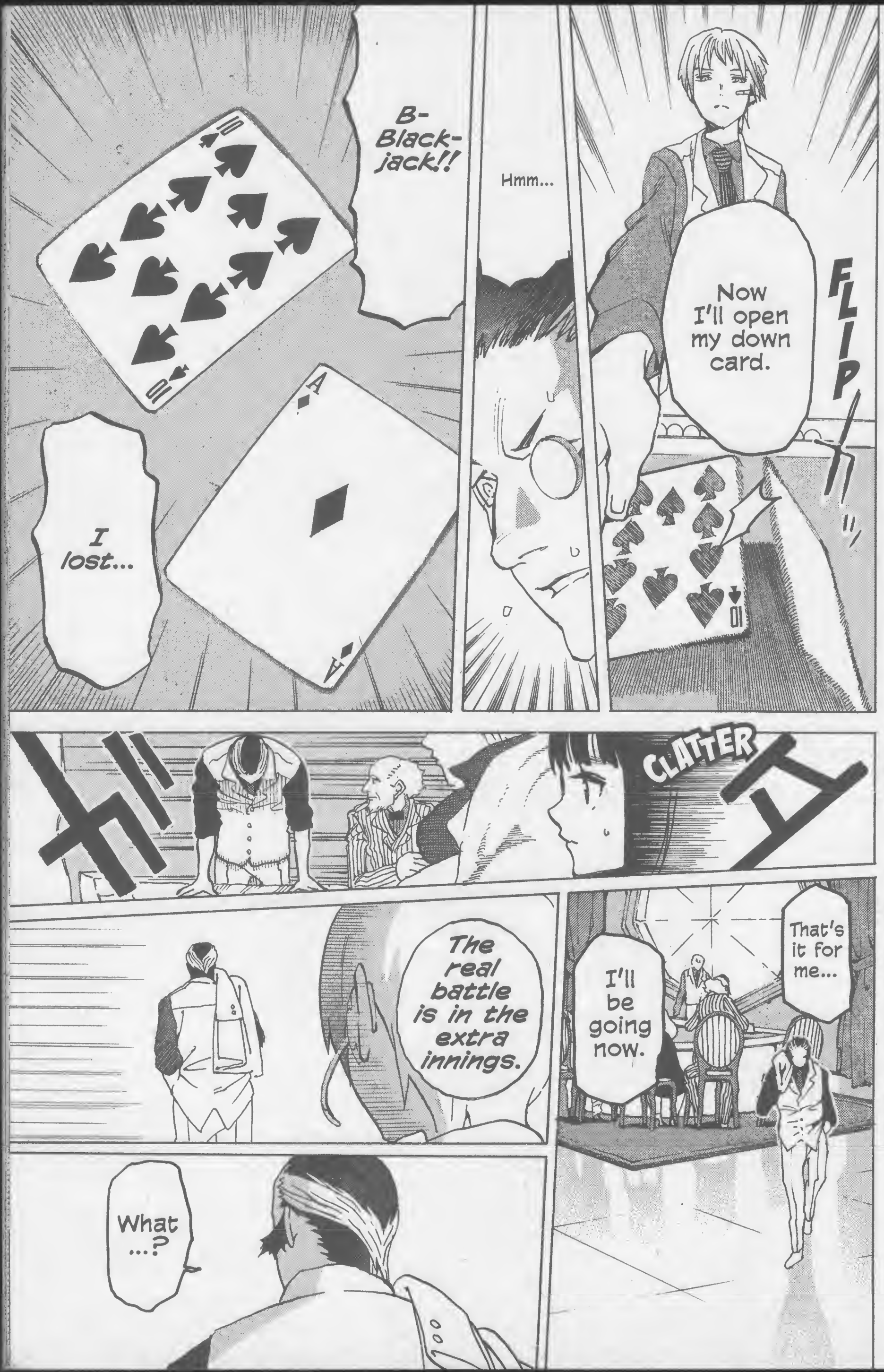
I've lost $100,000...
Now to get it back.
But...
...how?
Time for the next game.
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

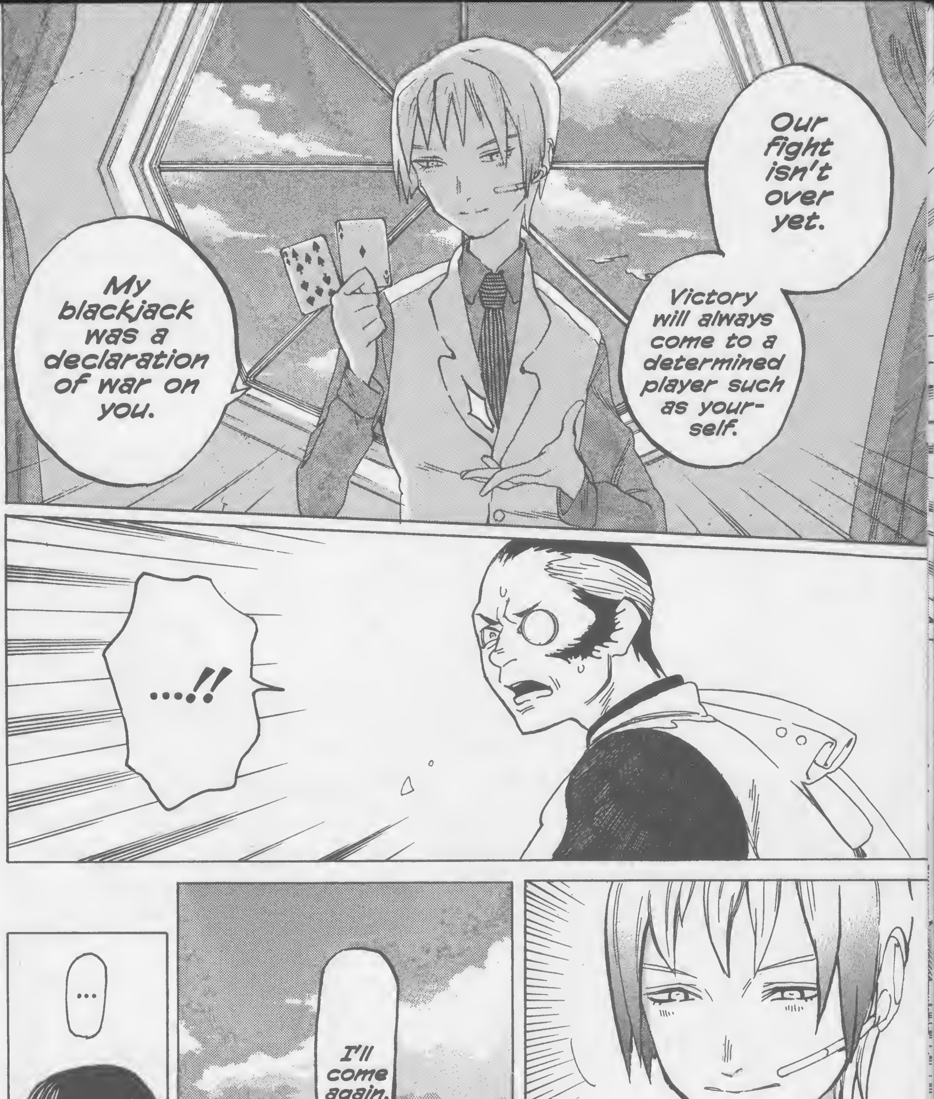
Chapter 21: Crank Shaft (1)

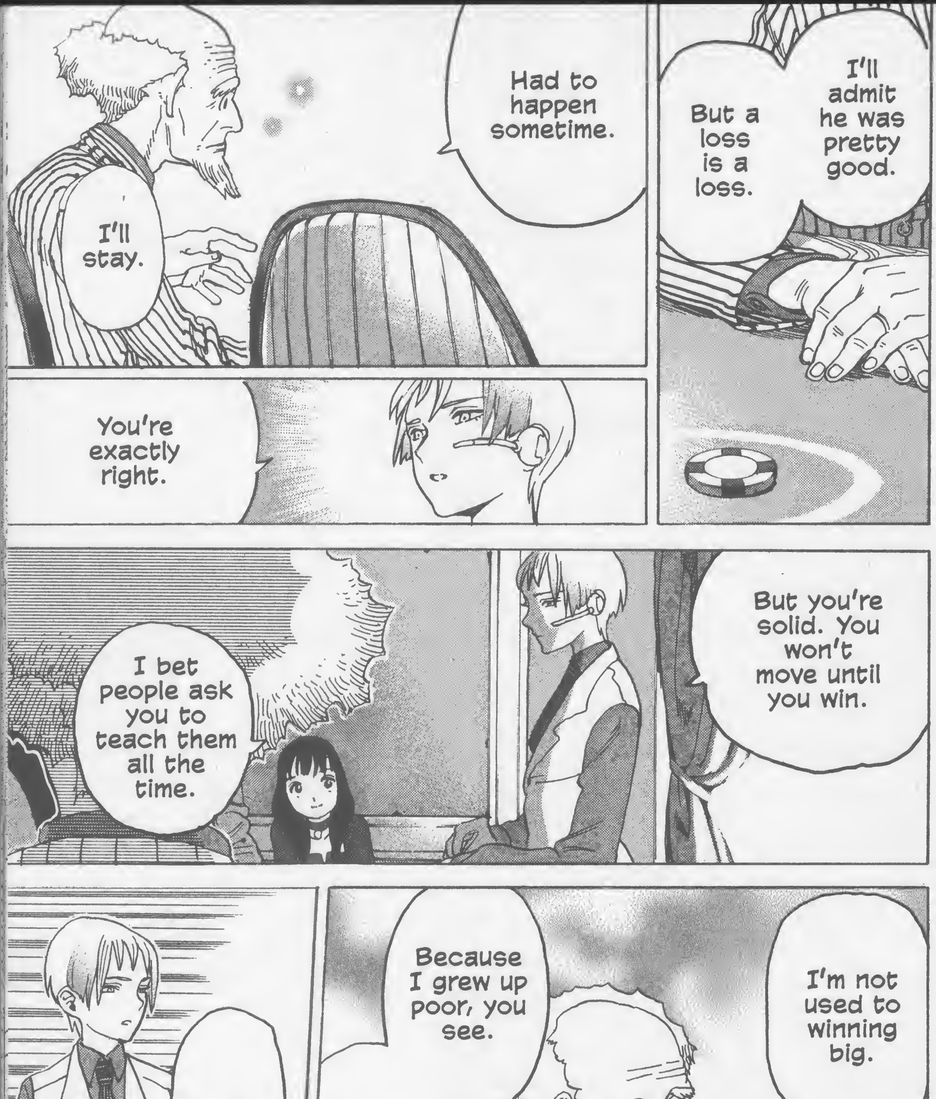

FWOOSH
Stay, Balot.
Stay!
Bust. Dealer loses.
THUD
Con-gratu-lations.
CLINK
Betting $600 only gets me $1200 back...
Long way to go...

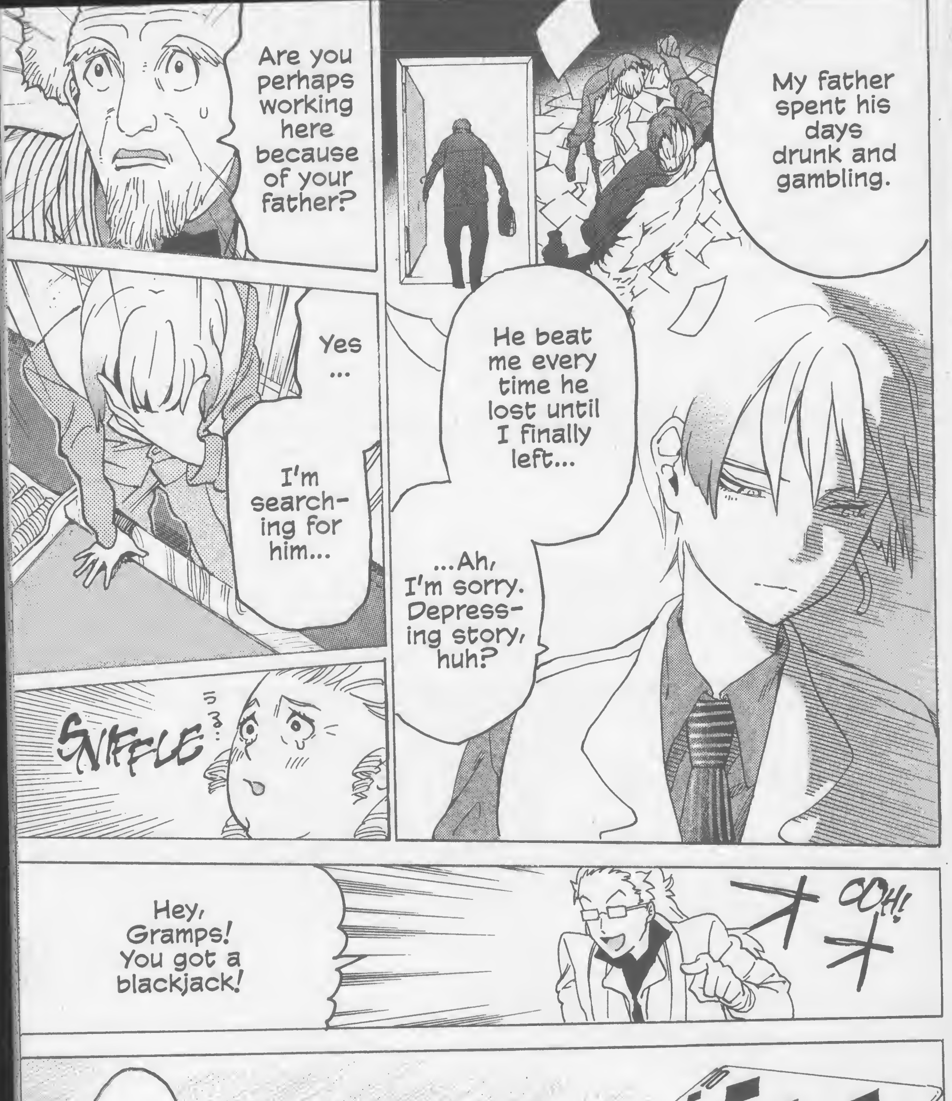

But why didn't I realize I was losing $100,000 to begin with?!
You were too wrapped up in each individual hand.
...Guess you're right...
And *for some reason*, the bets were always high when you lost.
And the guy with the monocle *always made* risky bets.
And the old guy was *always* totally predictable.
And the lady's bets were *always* all over the place.

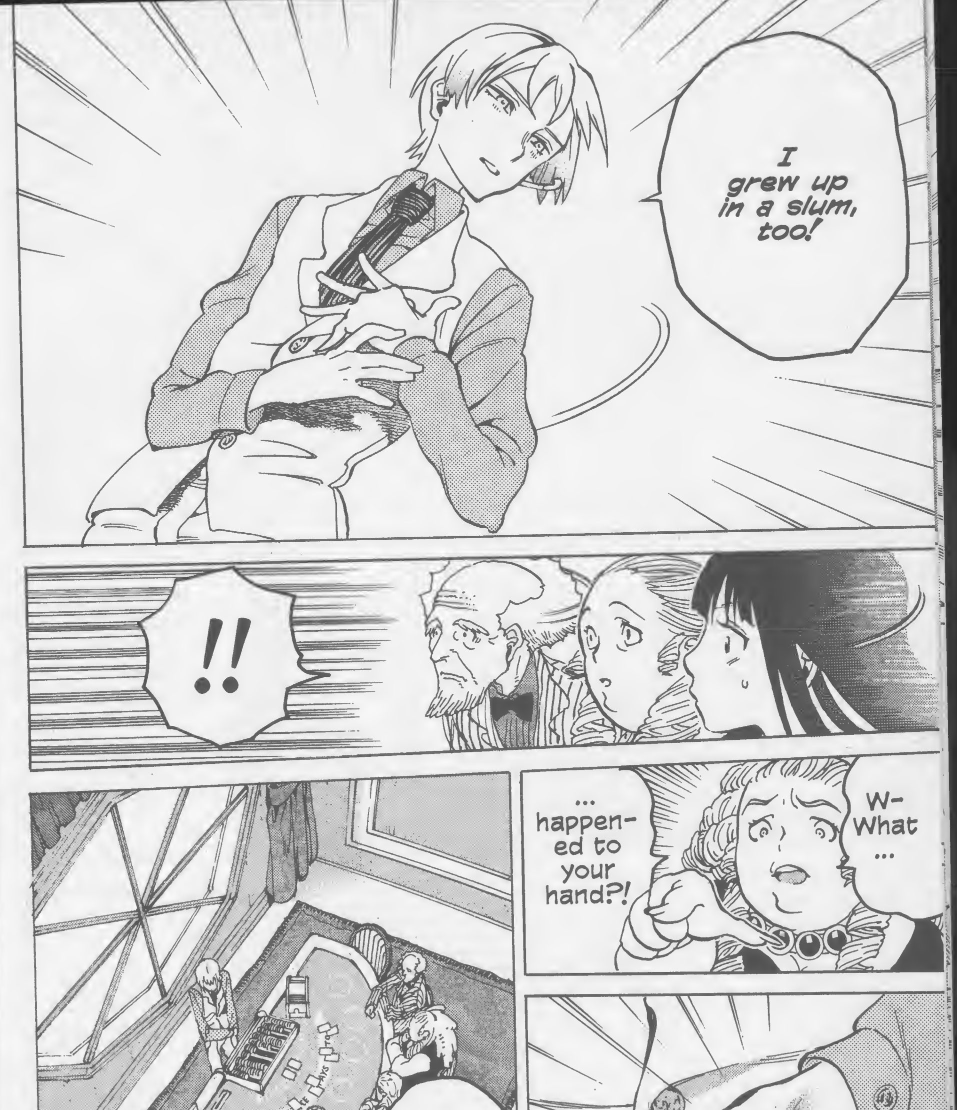

Why didn't you tell me I was losing so much?
Because it was more convenient.
... "Convenient?"
For now, it's better for you to play as you wish.
Such conservative play doesn't suit you.
Time for a counter-attack!
D-Double down!!
20!!
yes!

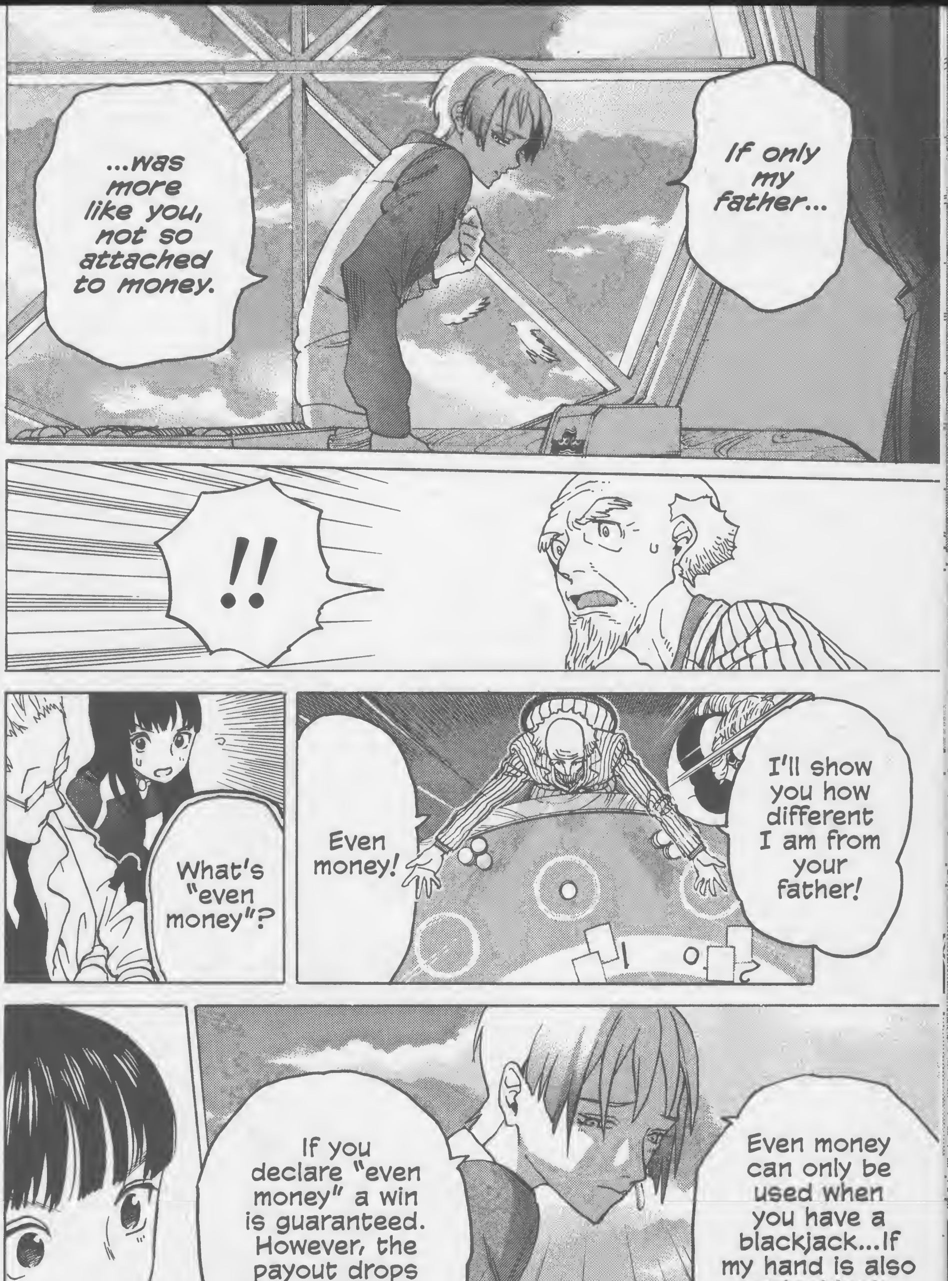

Now I'll open my down card.
FLIP
Hmm...
B-Blackjack!!
I lost...
CLATTER
That's it for me...
I'll be going now.
The real battle is in the extra innings.
What ...?

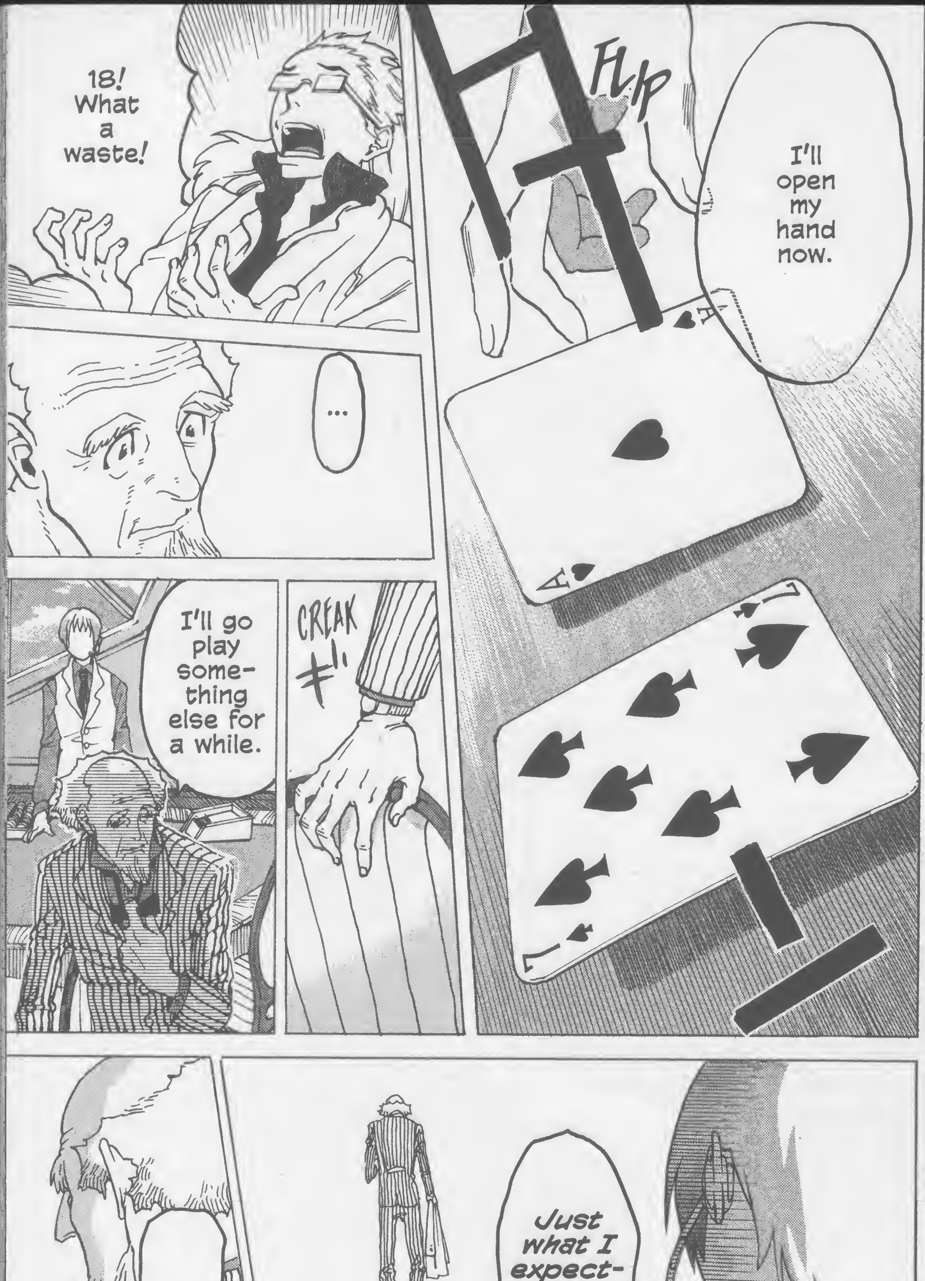

Our fight isn't over yet.
Victory will always come to a determined player such as yourself.
My blackjack was a declaration of war on you.
...!!
...
I'll come again.
...

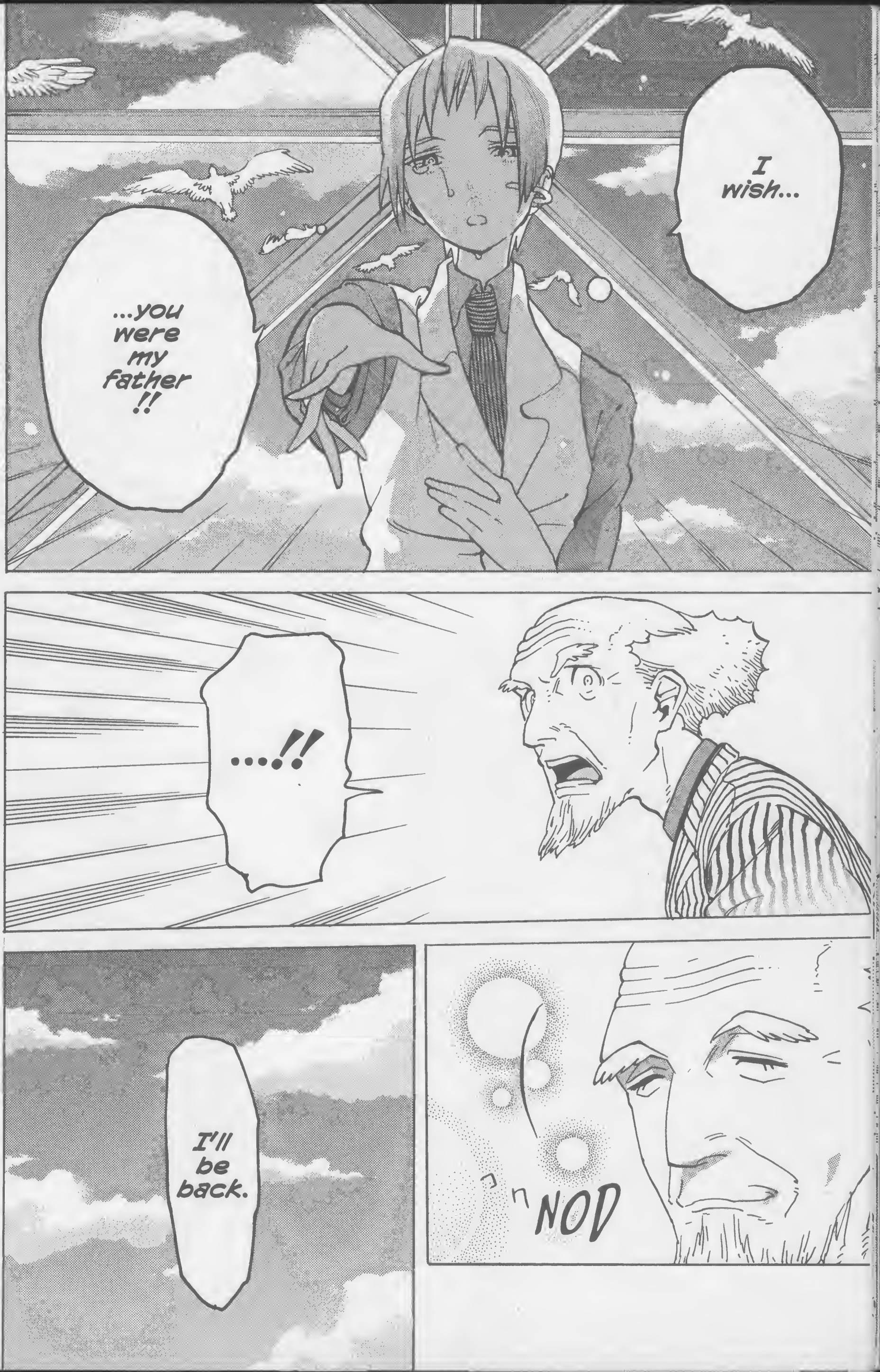

I'll admit he was pretty good.
But a loss is a loss.
Had to happen sometime.
I'll stay.
You're exactly right.
But you're solid. You won't move until you win.
I bet people ask you to teach them all the time.
I'm not used to winning big.
Because I grew up poor, you see.
Grew up in a slum.
Slum...?!

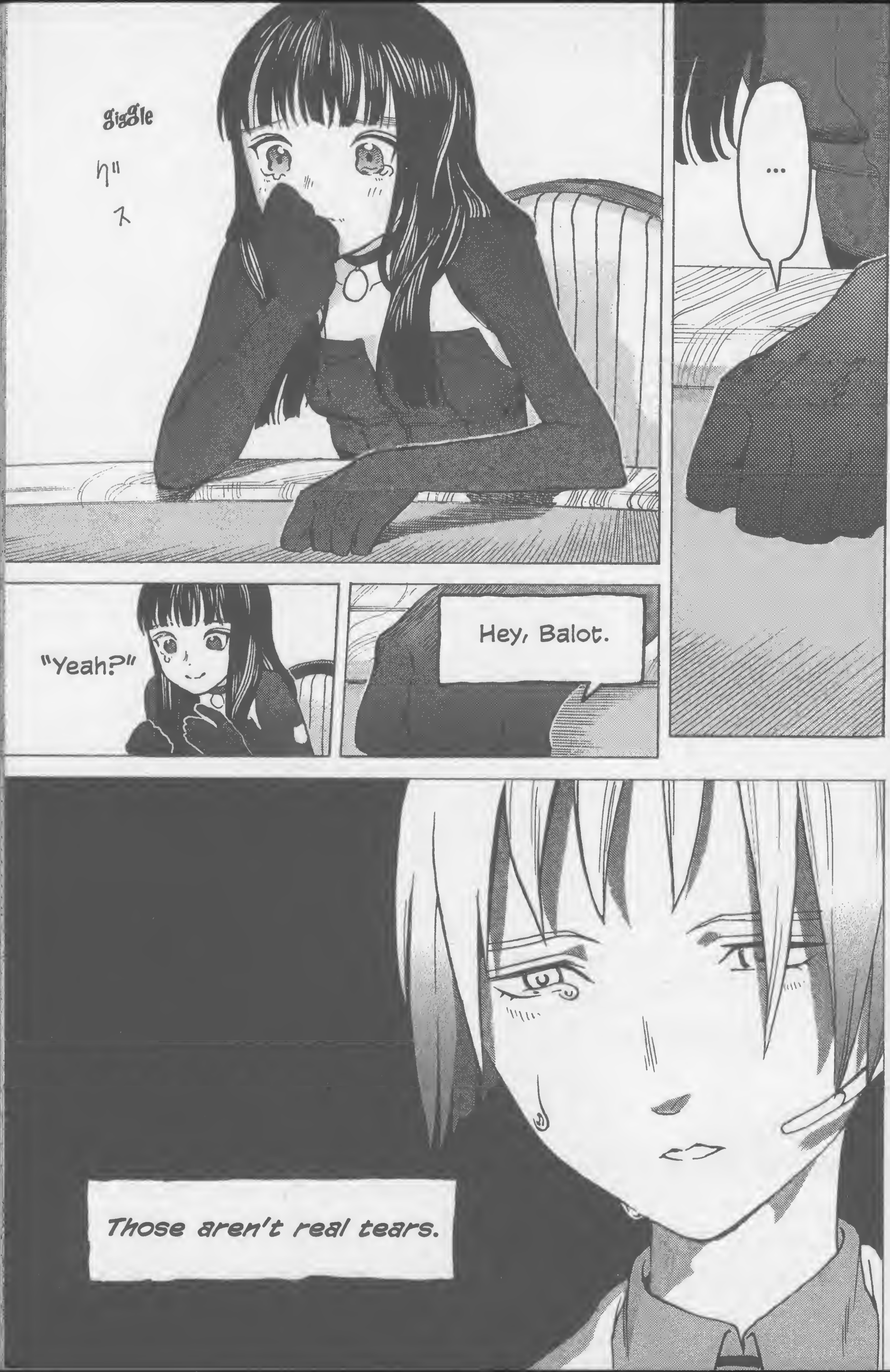

Are you perhaps working here because of your father?
Yes ...
I'm searching for him...
My father spent his days drunk and gambling.
He beat me every time he lost until I finally left...
...Ah, I'm sorry. Depressing story, huh?
SNIFFLE
Hey, Gramps! You got a blackjack!
OOH!
Huh. Will you look at that...

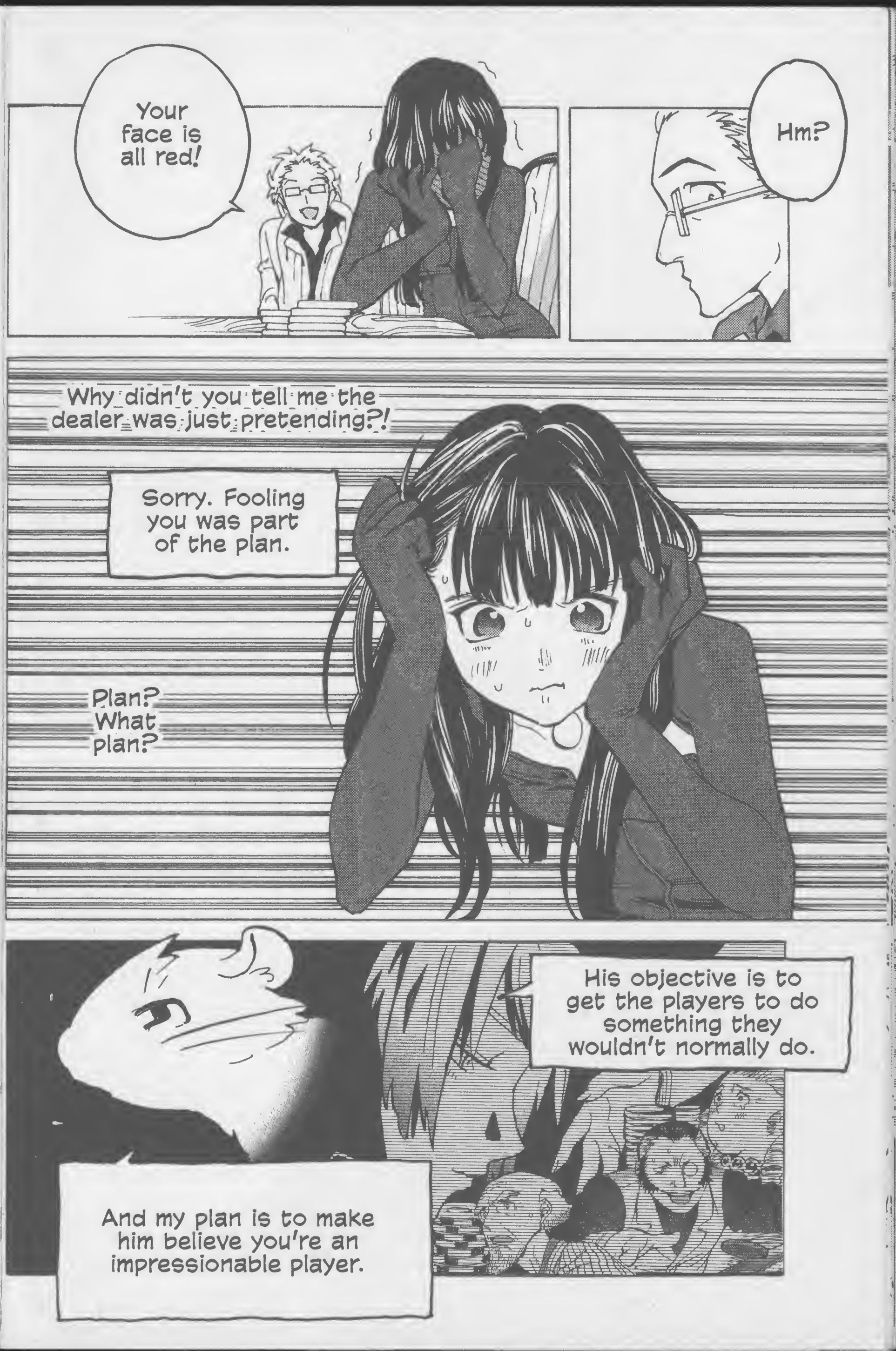

I grew up in a slum, too!
!!
W-What ...
... happened to your hand?!
It's a scar...
... from my time in the slum ...

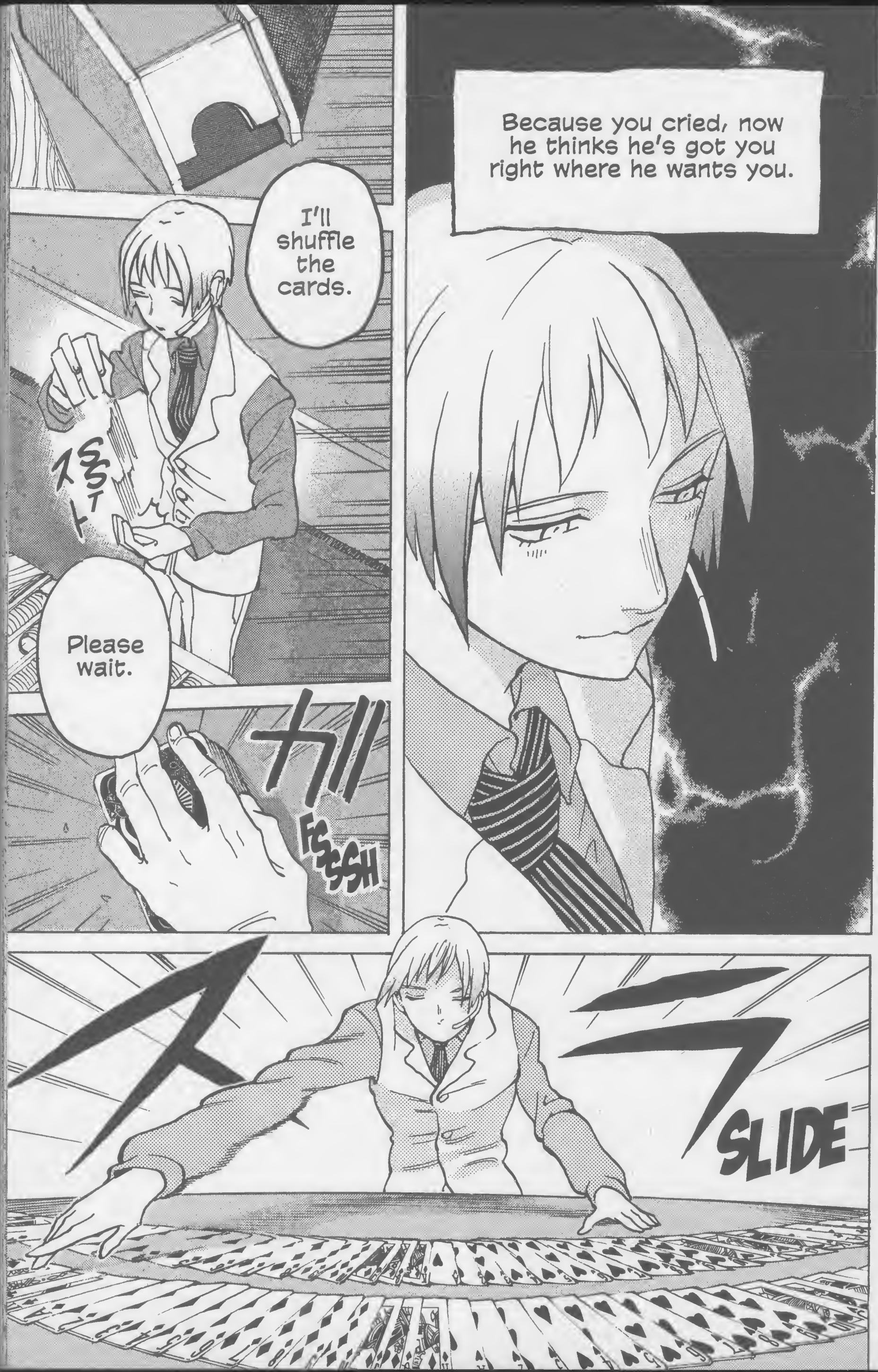

If only my father...
...was more like you, not so attached to money.
!!
I'll show you how different I am from your father!
Even money!
What's "even money"?
Even money can only be used when you have a blackjack...If my hand is also a blackjack, it's a push.
If you declare "even money" a win is guaranteed. However, the payout drops from 150% to 100%.

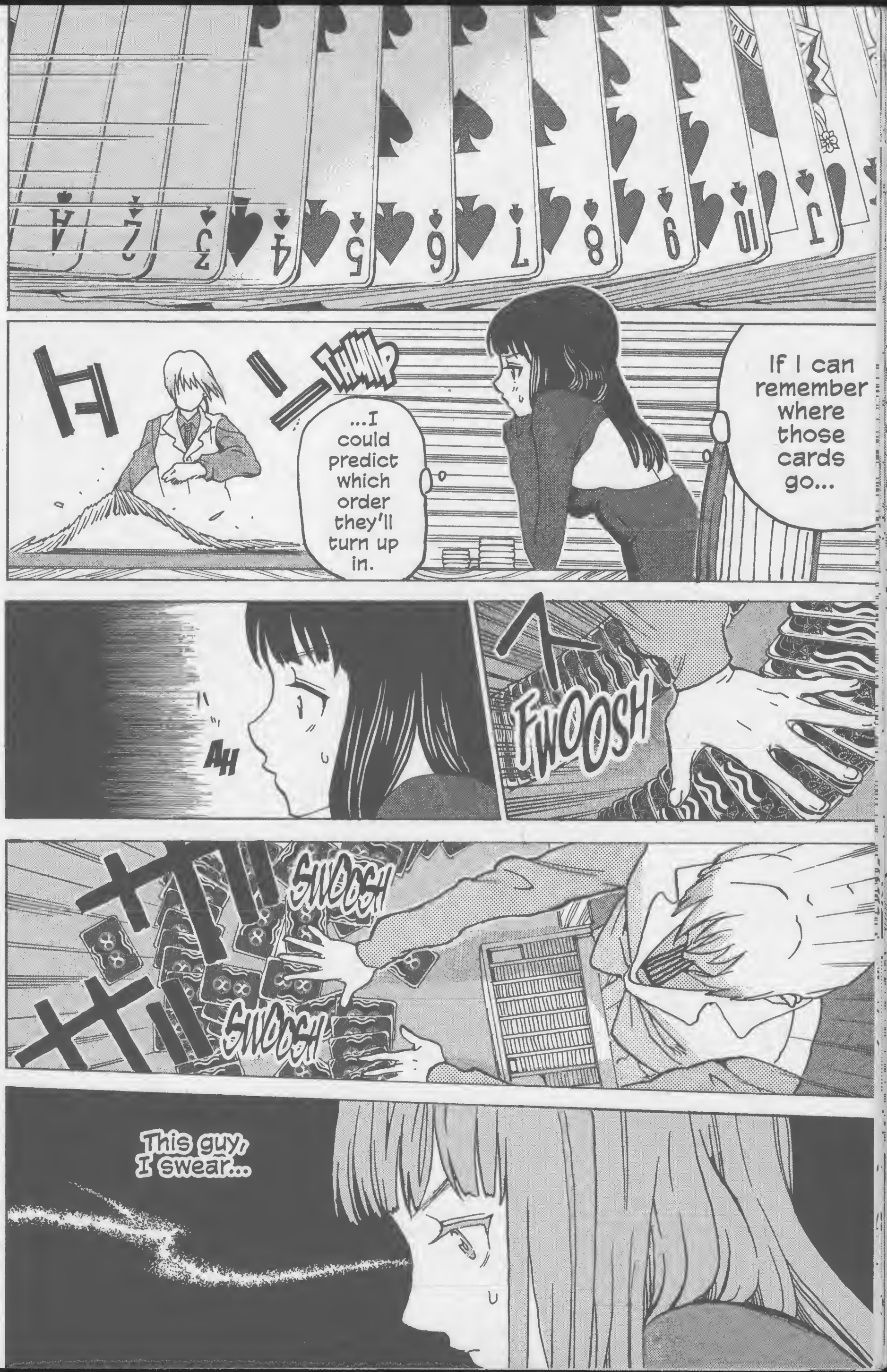

FLIP
I'll open my hand now.
18! What a waste!
...
CREAK
I'll go play something else for a while.
Just what I expected.
...!!

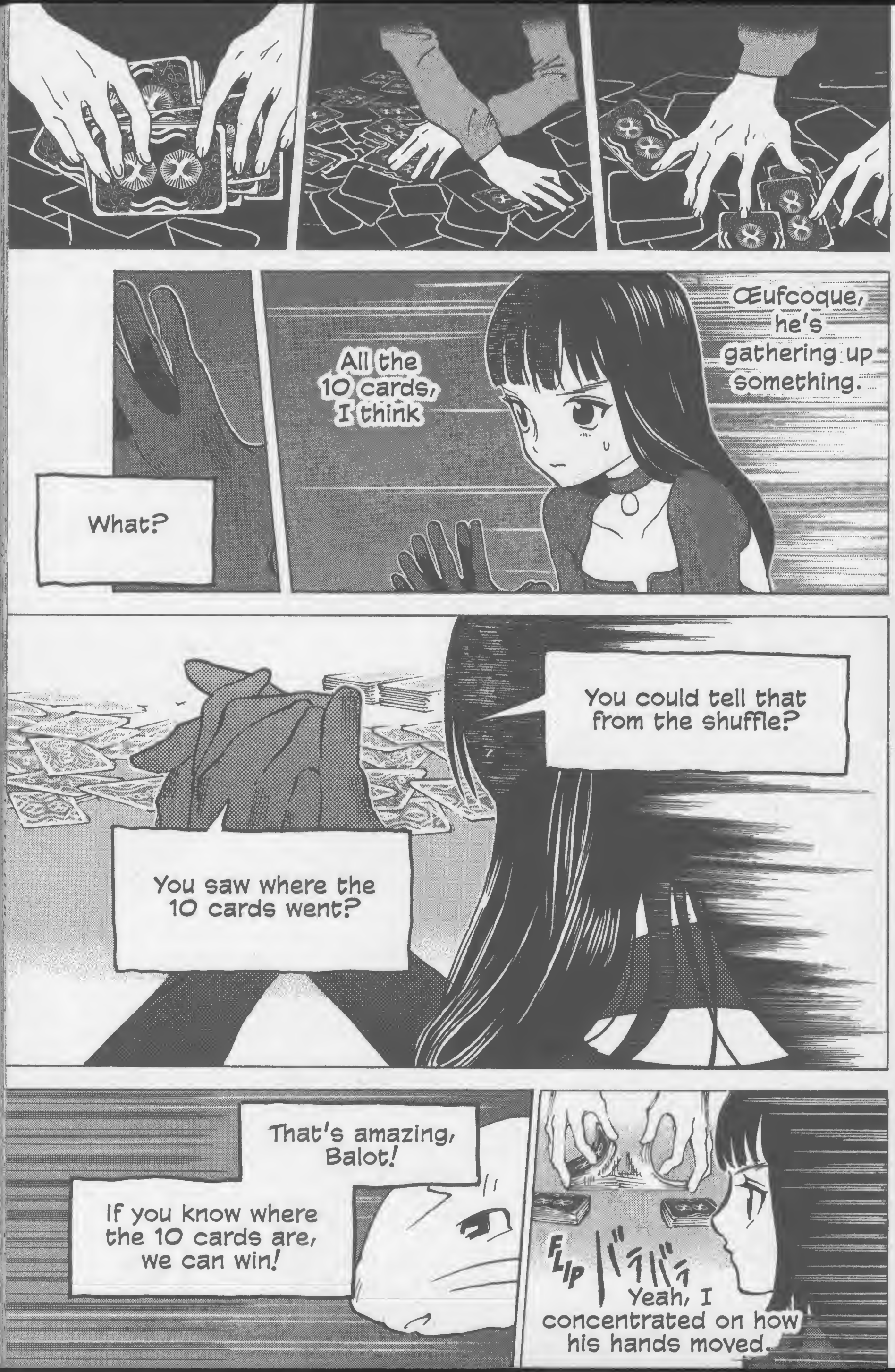

I wish...
...you were my father!!
...!!
I'll be back.
NOD

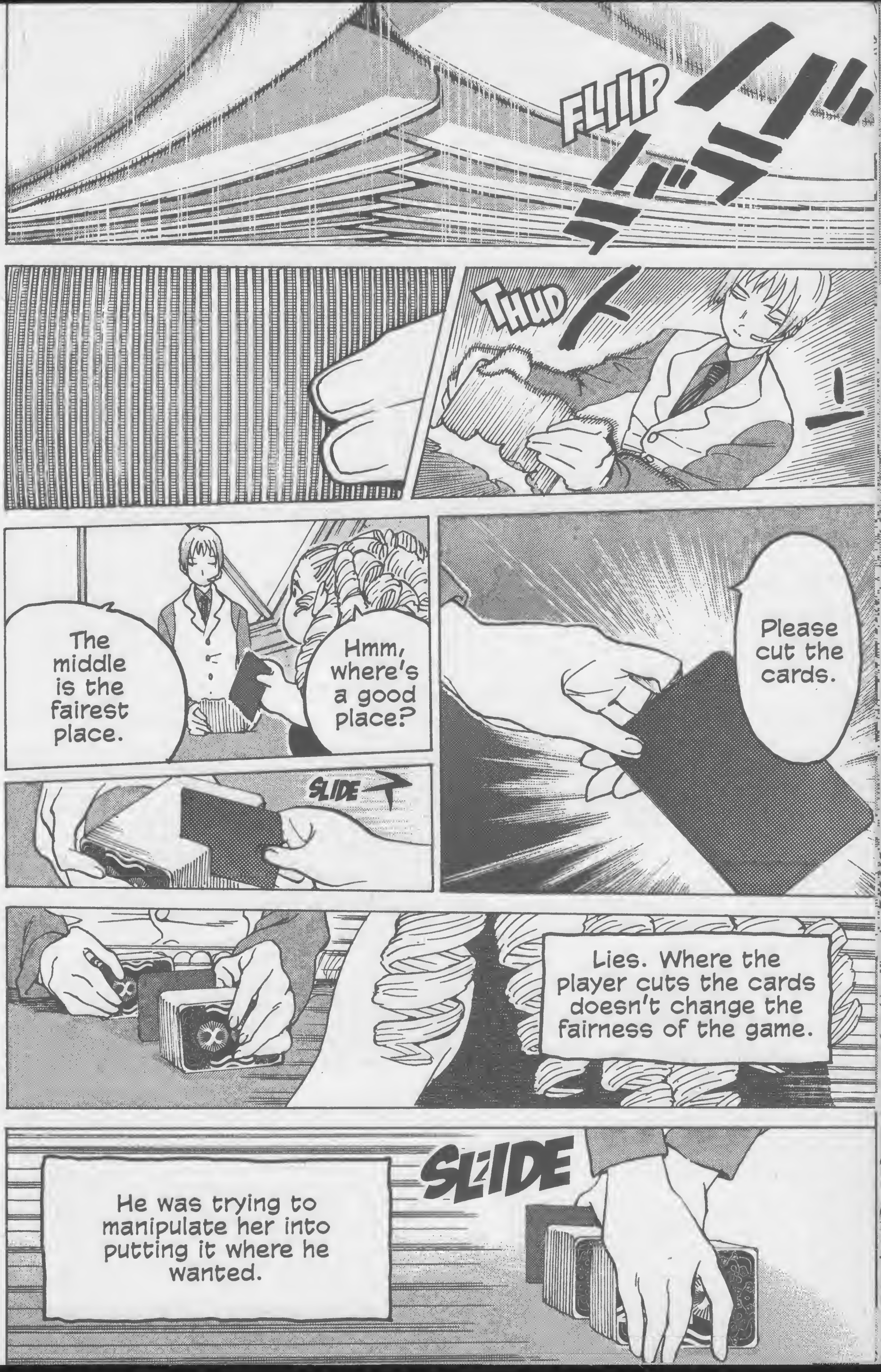

giggle
グス
...
Hey, Balot.
"Yeah?"
Those aren't real tears.

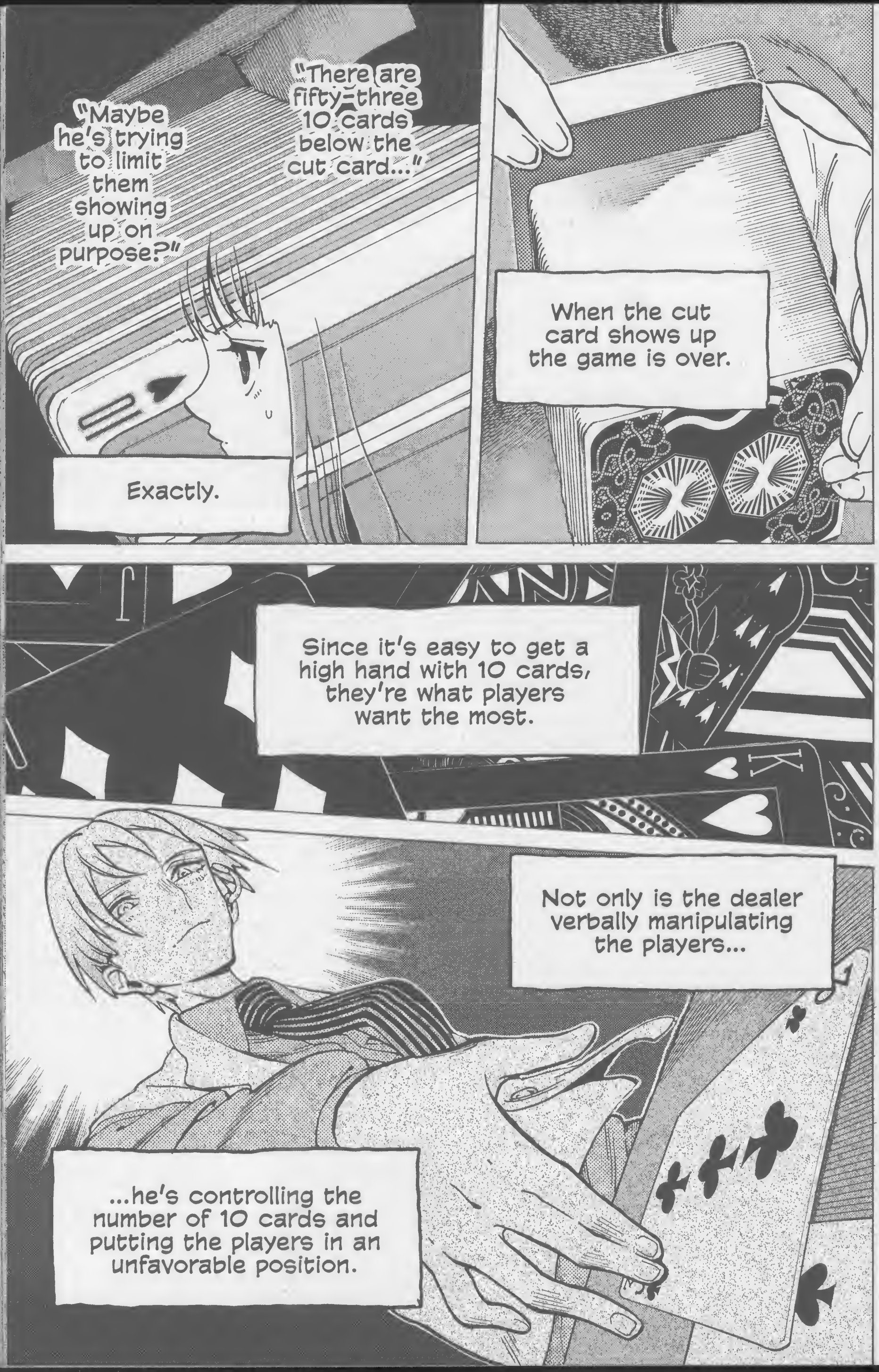

Hm?
Your face is all red!
Why didn't you tell me the dealer was just pretending?!
Sorry. Fooling you was part of the plan.
Plan? What plan?
His objective is to get the players to do something they wouldn't normally do.
And my plan is to make him believe you're an impressionable player.

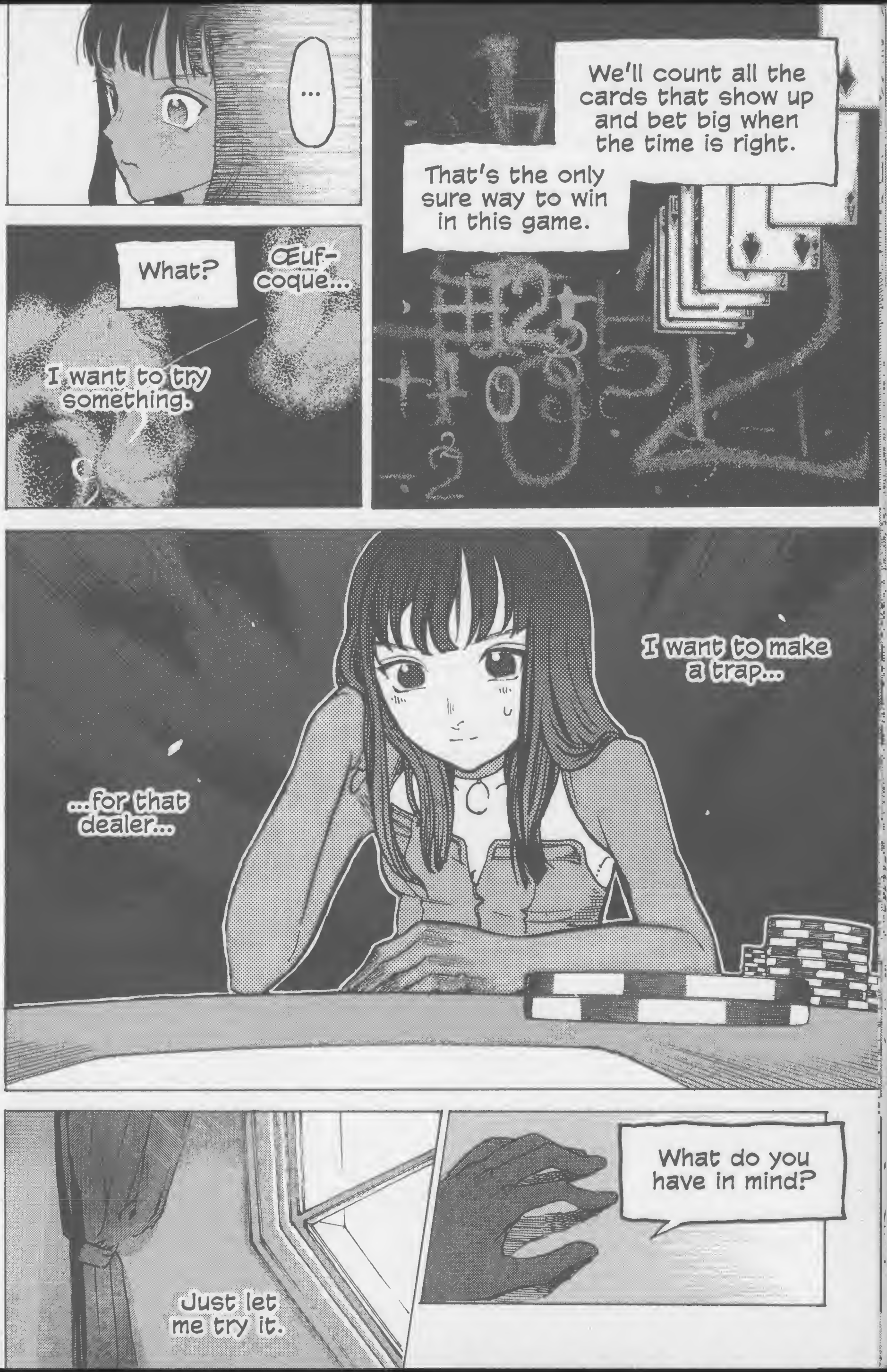

Because you cried, now he thinks he's got you right where he wants you.
I'll shuffle the cards.
スト
SST
Please wait.
カッ
FSSSH
ス
ラ
SLIDE

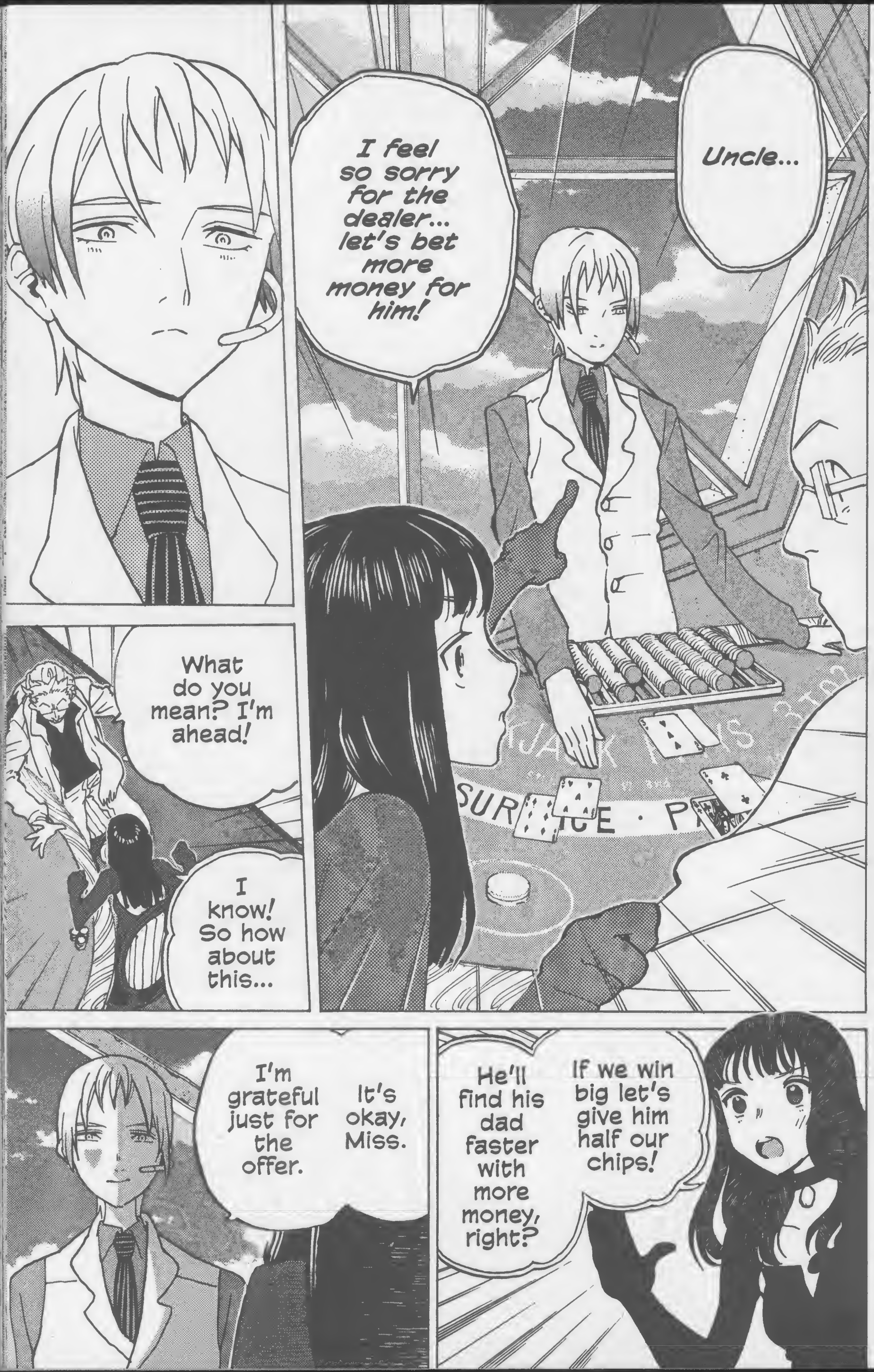

If I can remember where those cards go...
...I could predict which order they'll turn up in.
THUMP
AH
FWOOSH
SWOOSH
SWOOSH
This guy, I swear...

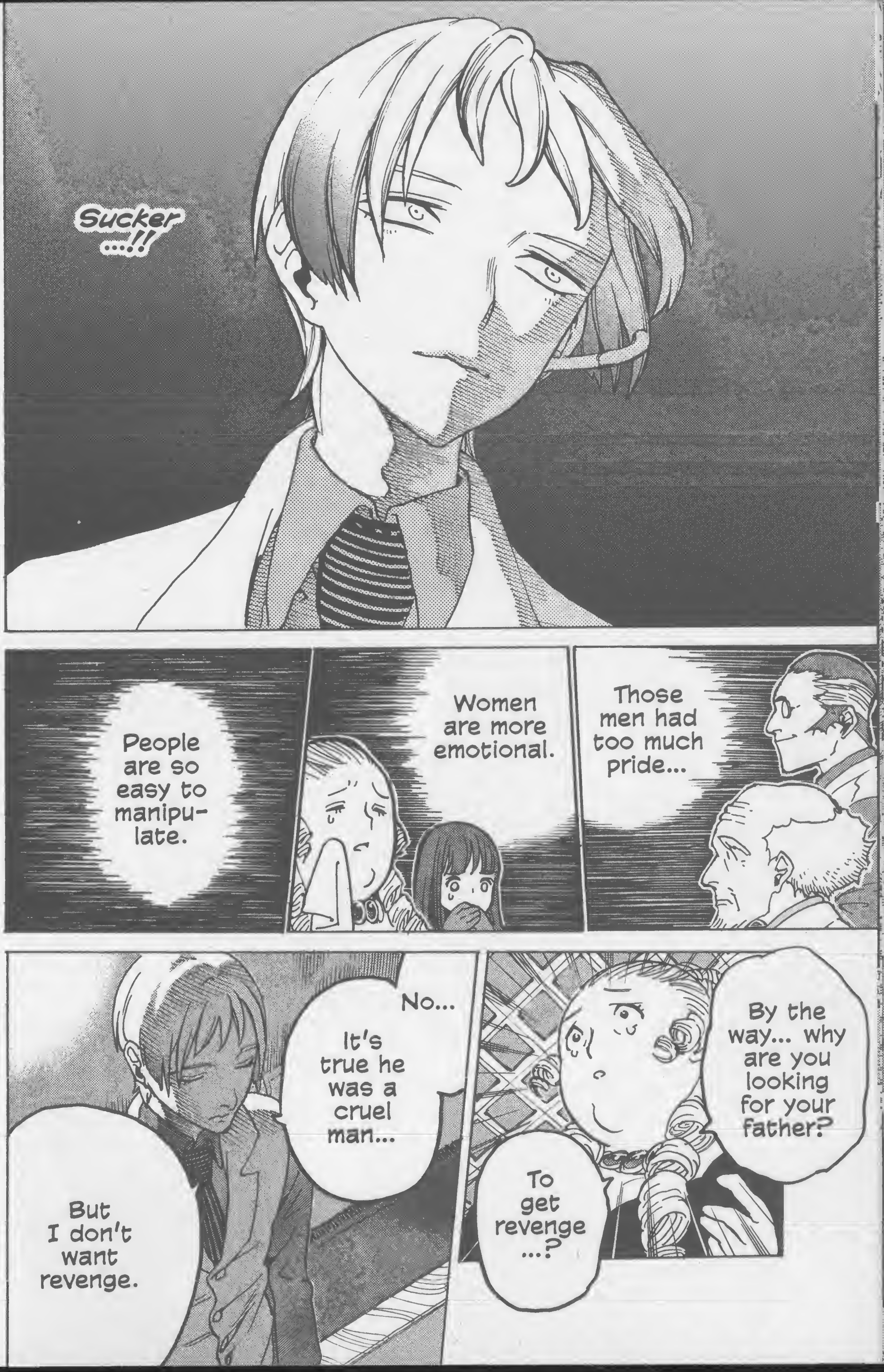

Œufcoque, he's gathering up something.
All the 10 cards, I think
What?
You could tell that from the shuffle?
You saw where the 10 cards went?
バラバラ
FLIP
Yeah, I concentrated on how his hands moved.
That's amazing, Balot!
If you know where the 10 cards are, we can win!

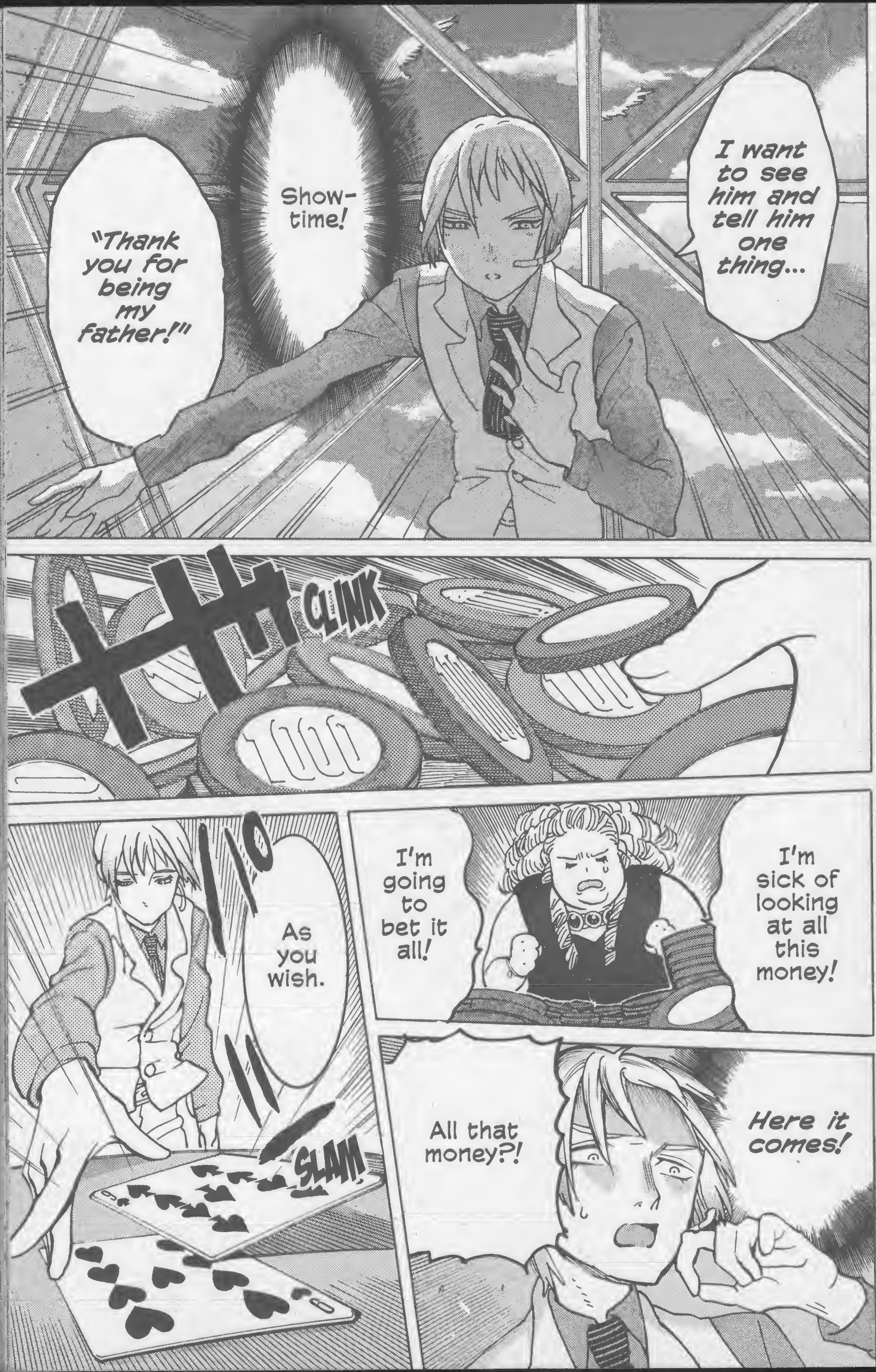

FLIIIP
THUD
Please cut the cards.
Hmm, where's a good place?
The middle is the fairest place.
SLIDE
Lies. Where the player cuts the cards doesn't change the fairness of the game.
SLIDE
He was trying to manipulate her into putting it where he wanted.

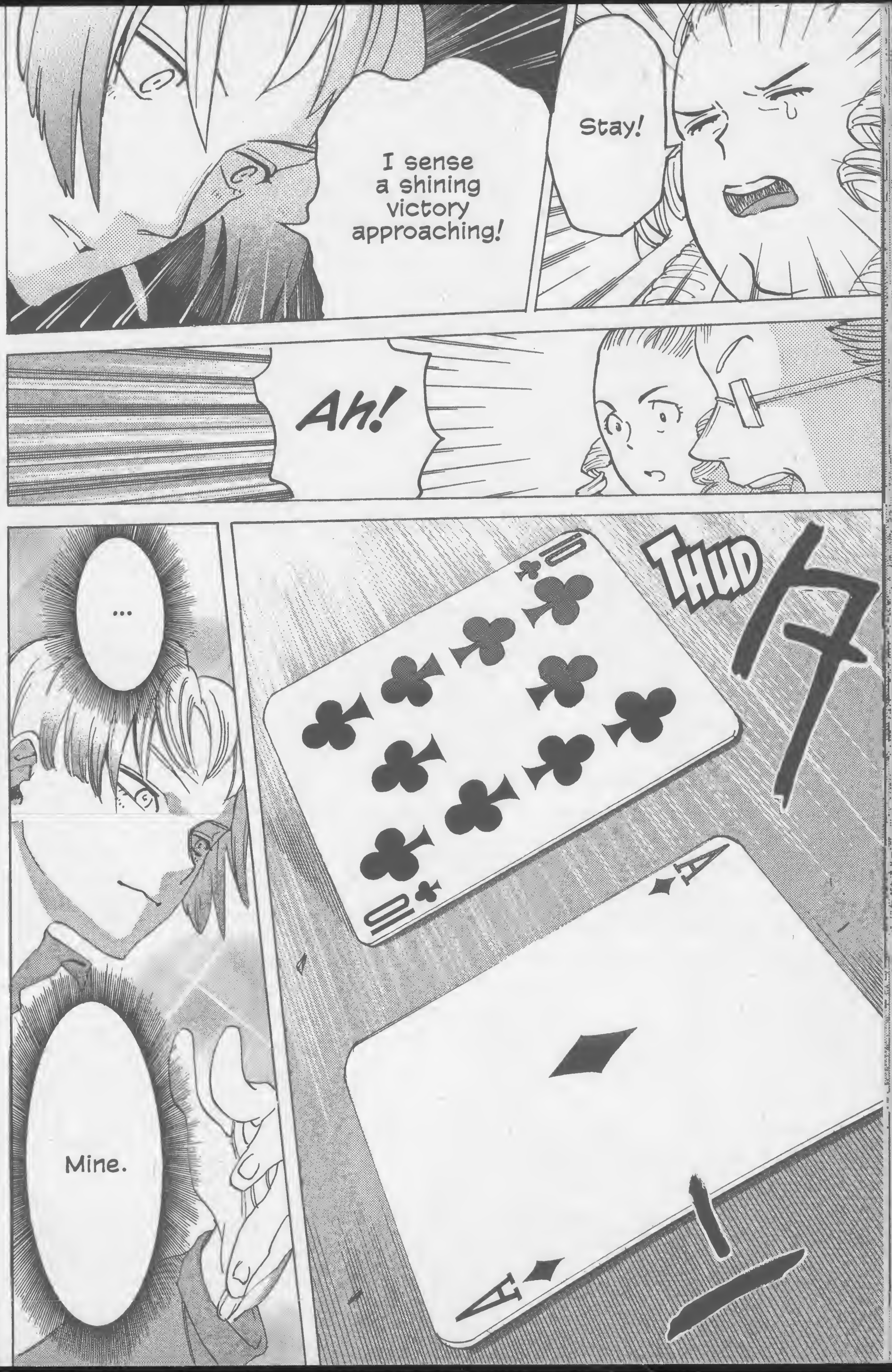

When the cut card shows up the game is over.
"There are fifty-three 10 cards below the cut card..."
"Maybe he's trying to limit them showing up on purpose?"
Exactly.
Since it's easy to get a high hand with 10 cards, they're what players want the most.
Not only is the dealer verbally manipulating the players...
...he's controlling the number of 10 cards and putting the players in an unfavorable position.

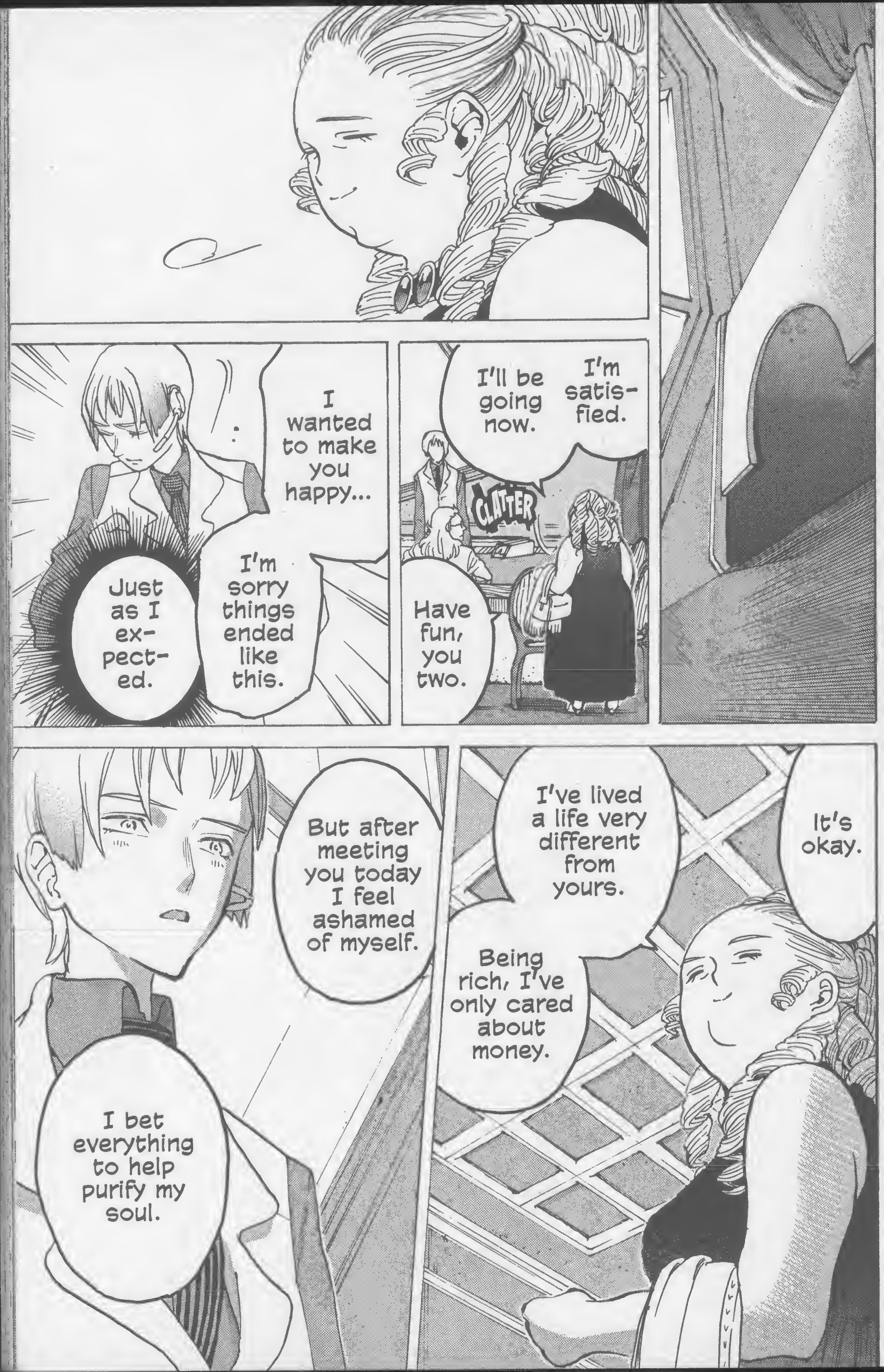

We'll count all the cards that show up and bet big when the time is right.
That's the only sure way to win in this game.
...
Œuf-coque...
I want to try something.
What?
I want to make a trap...
...for that dealer...
What do you have in mind?
Just let me try it.

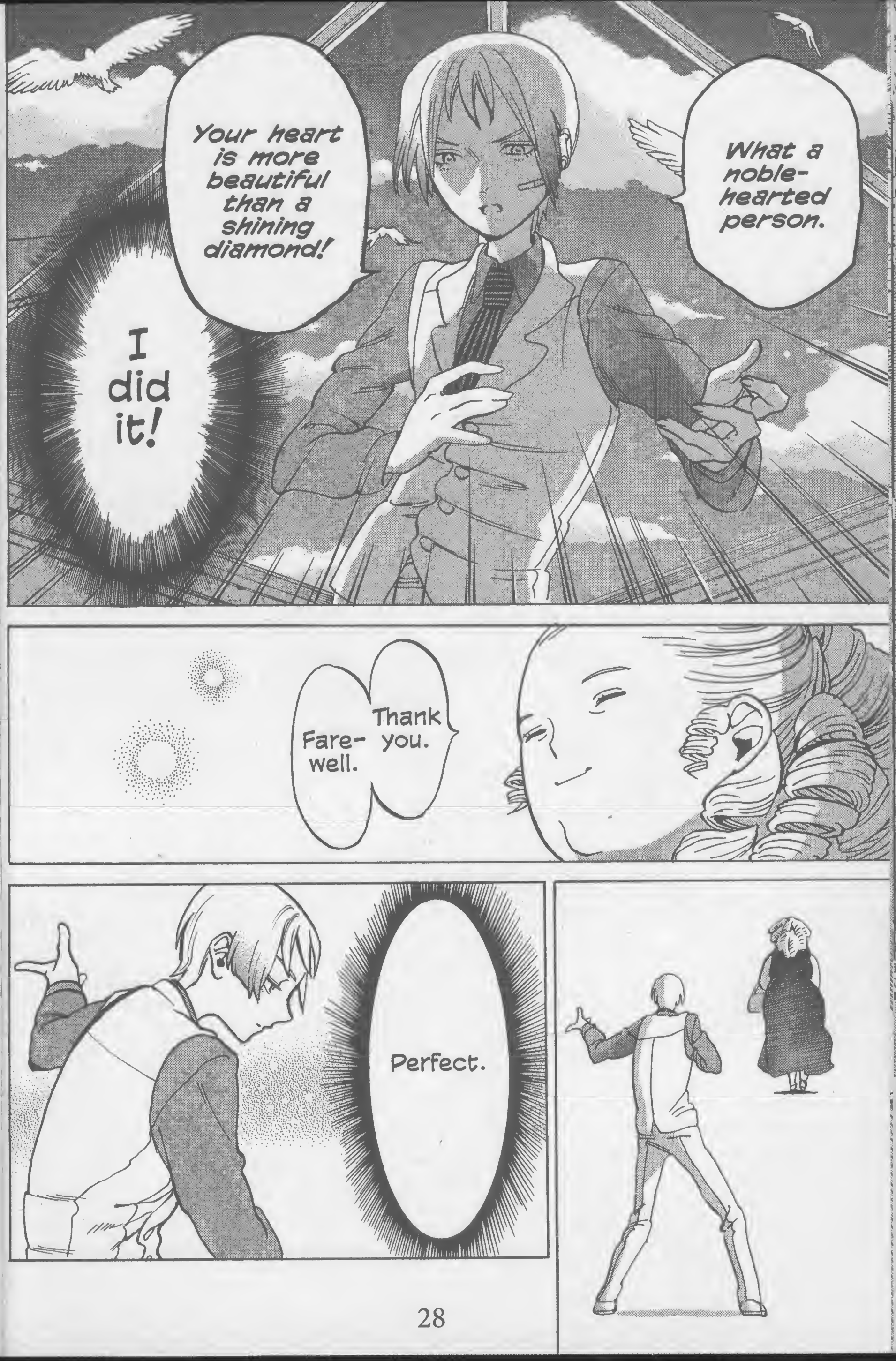

Uncle...
I feel so sorry for the dealer... let's bet more money for him!
What do you mean? I'm ahead!
I know! So how about this...
If we win big let's give him half our chips!
He'll find his dad faster with more money, right?
It's okay, Miss.
I'm grateful just for the offer.

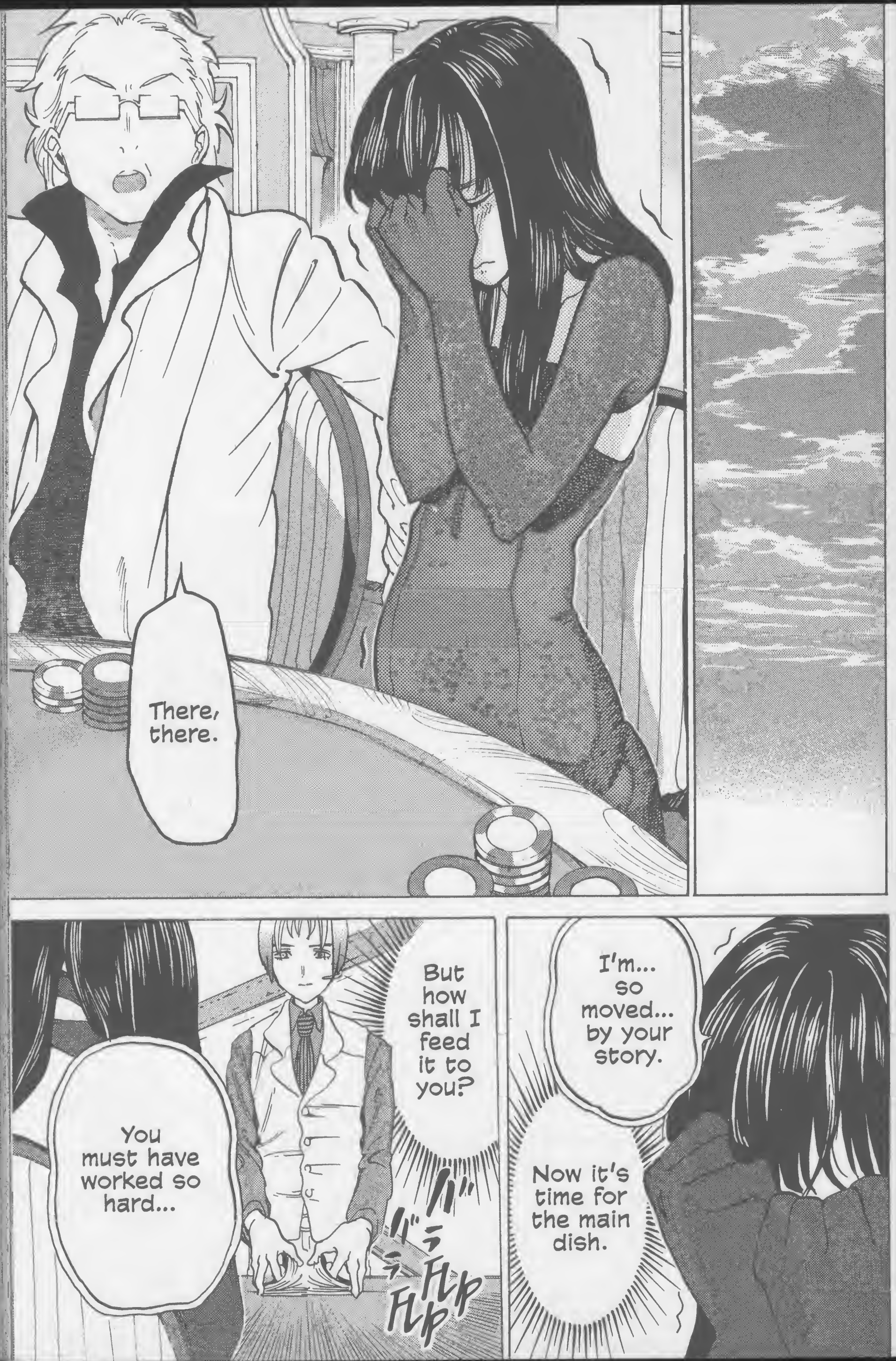

Sucker ...!!
Those men had too much pride...
Women are more emotional.
People are so easy to manipulate.
By the way... why are you looking for your father?
To get revenge ...?
No...
It's true he was a cruel man...
But I don't want revenge.

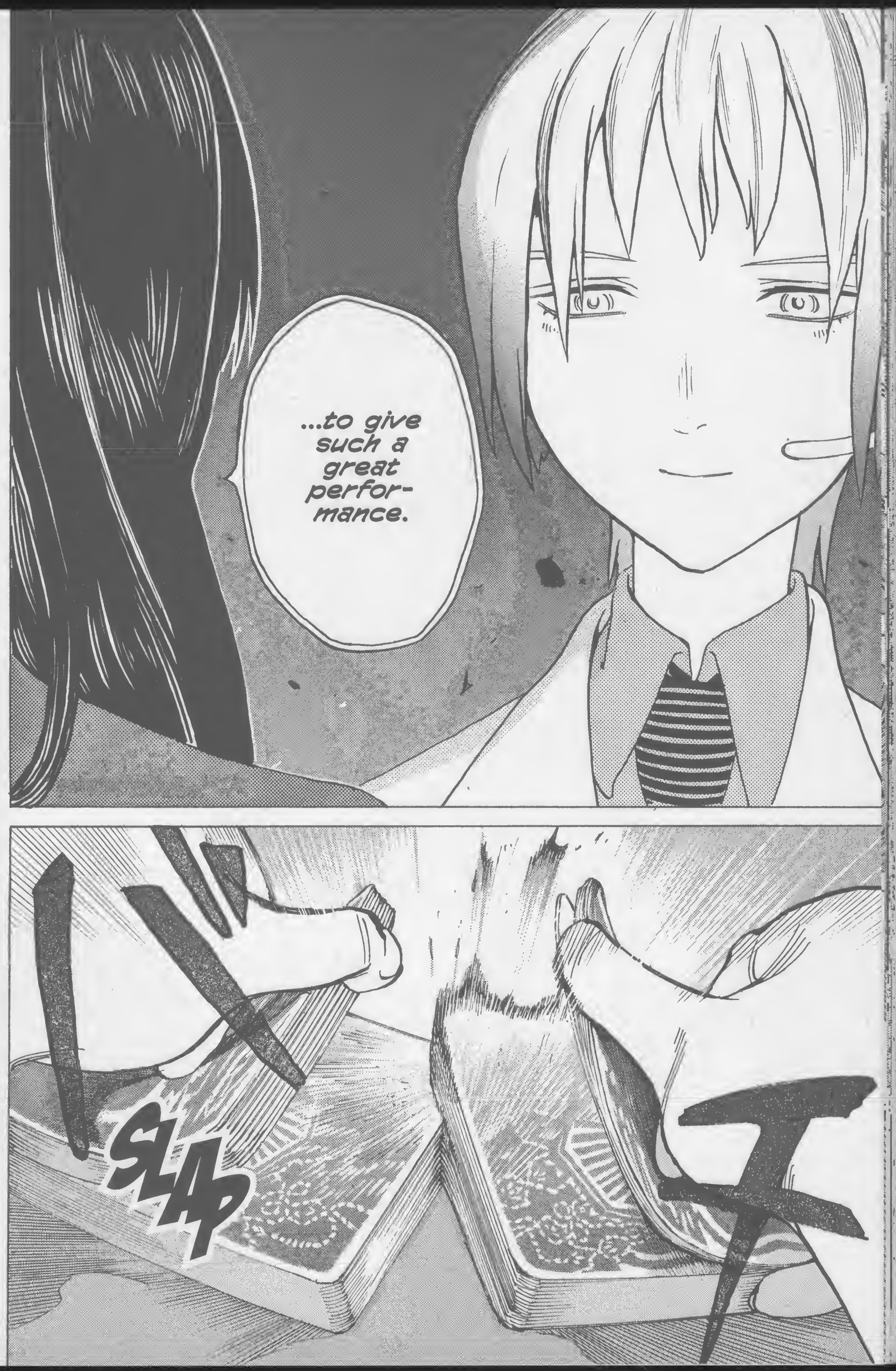

I want to see him and tell him one thing...
Show-time!
"Thank you for being my father!"
CLINK
I'm sick of looking at all this money!
I'm going to bet it all!
As you wish.
SLAM
Here it comes!
All that money?!

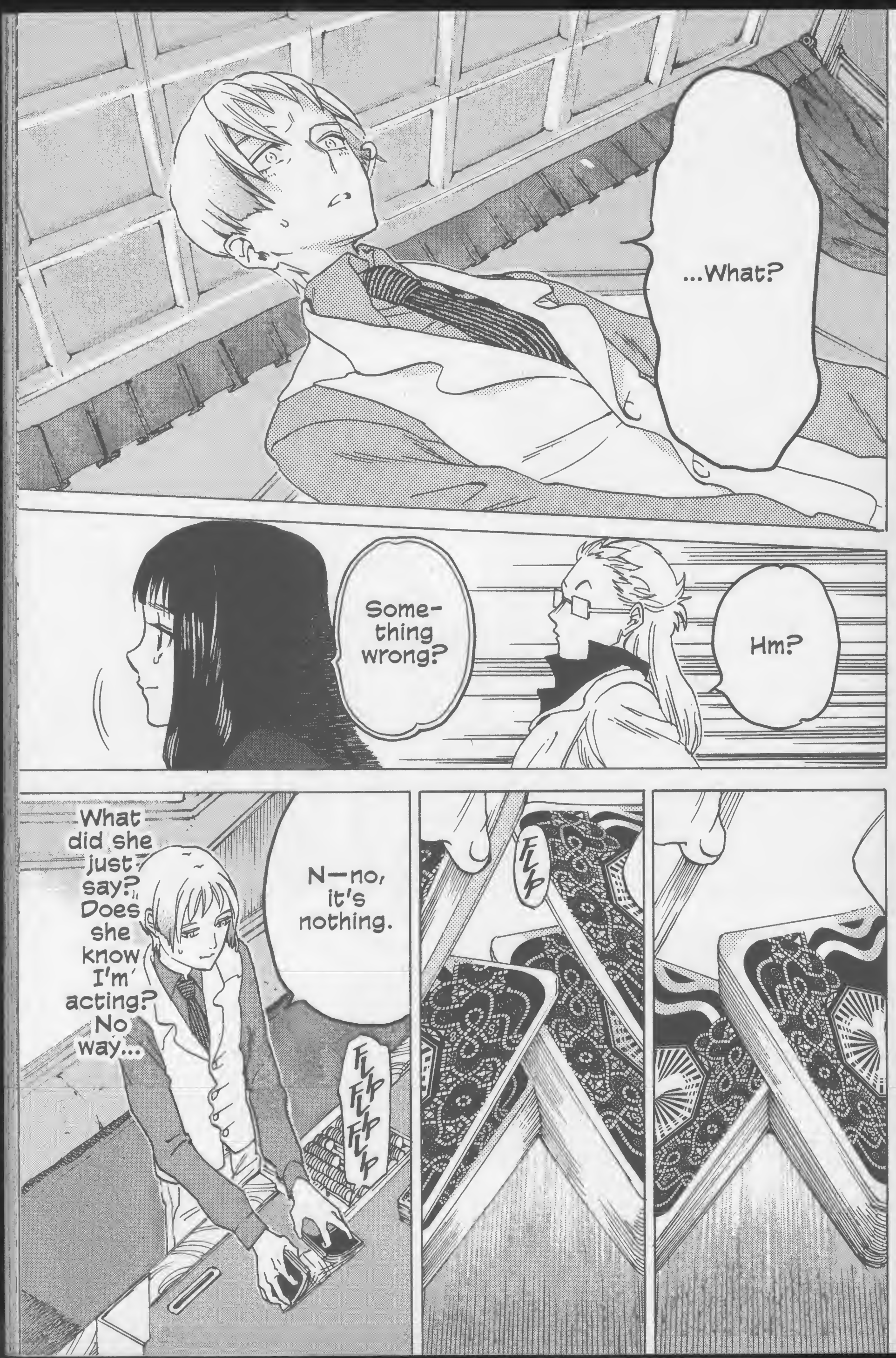

Stay!
I sense a shining victory approaching!
Ah!
THUD
ク
...
Mine.

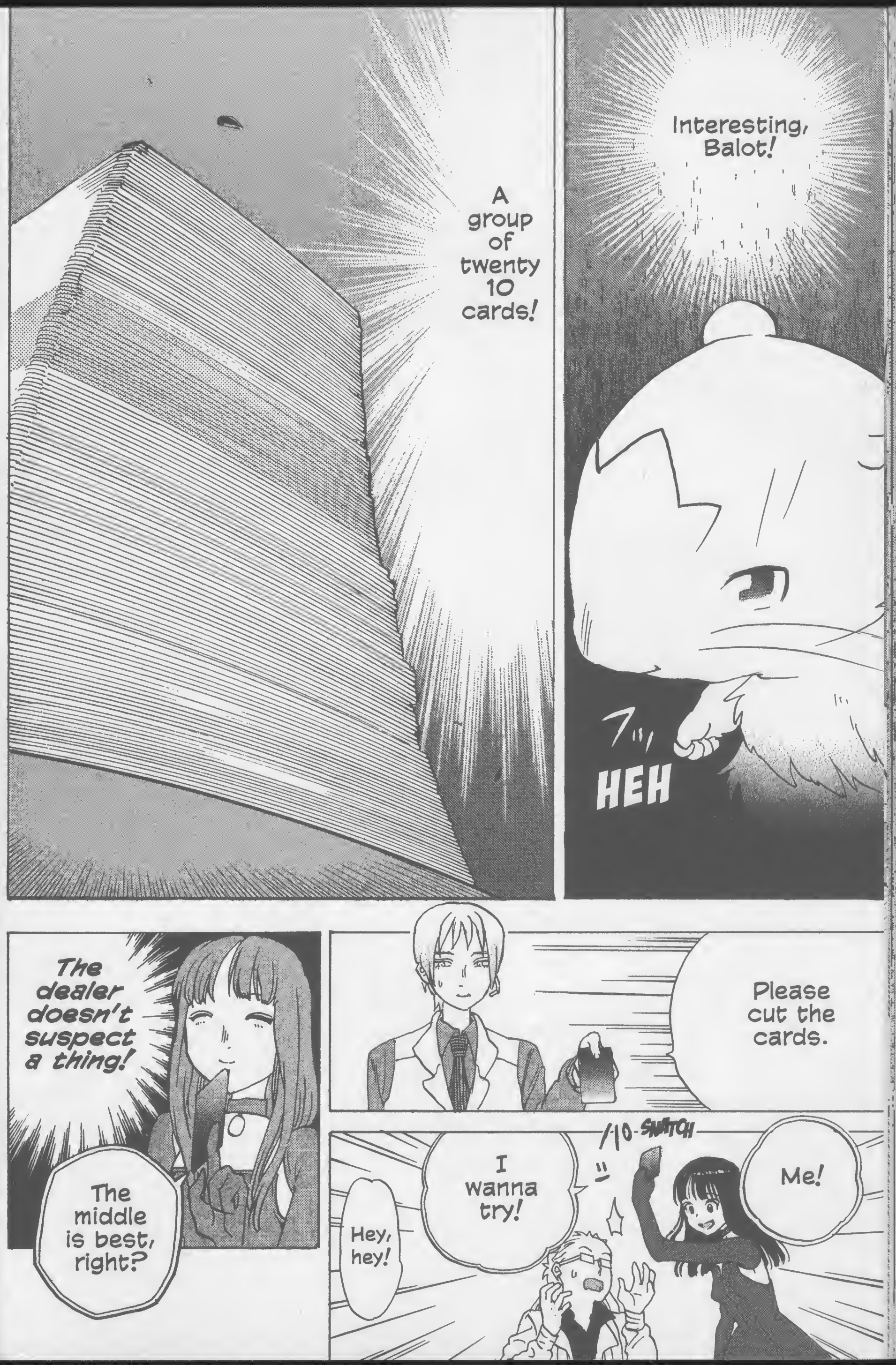

I'm satisfied.
I'll be going now.
CLATTER
Have fun, you two.
I wanted to make you happy...
I'm sorry things ended like this.
Just as I expected.
It's okay.
I've lived a life very different from yours.
Being rich, I've only cared about money.
But after meeting you today I feel ashamed of myself.
I bet everything to help purify my soul.

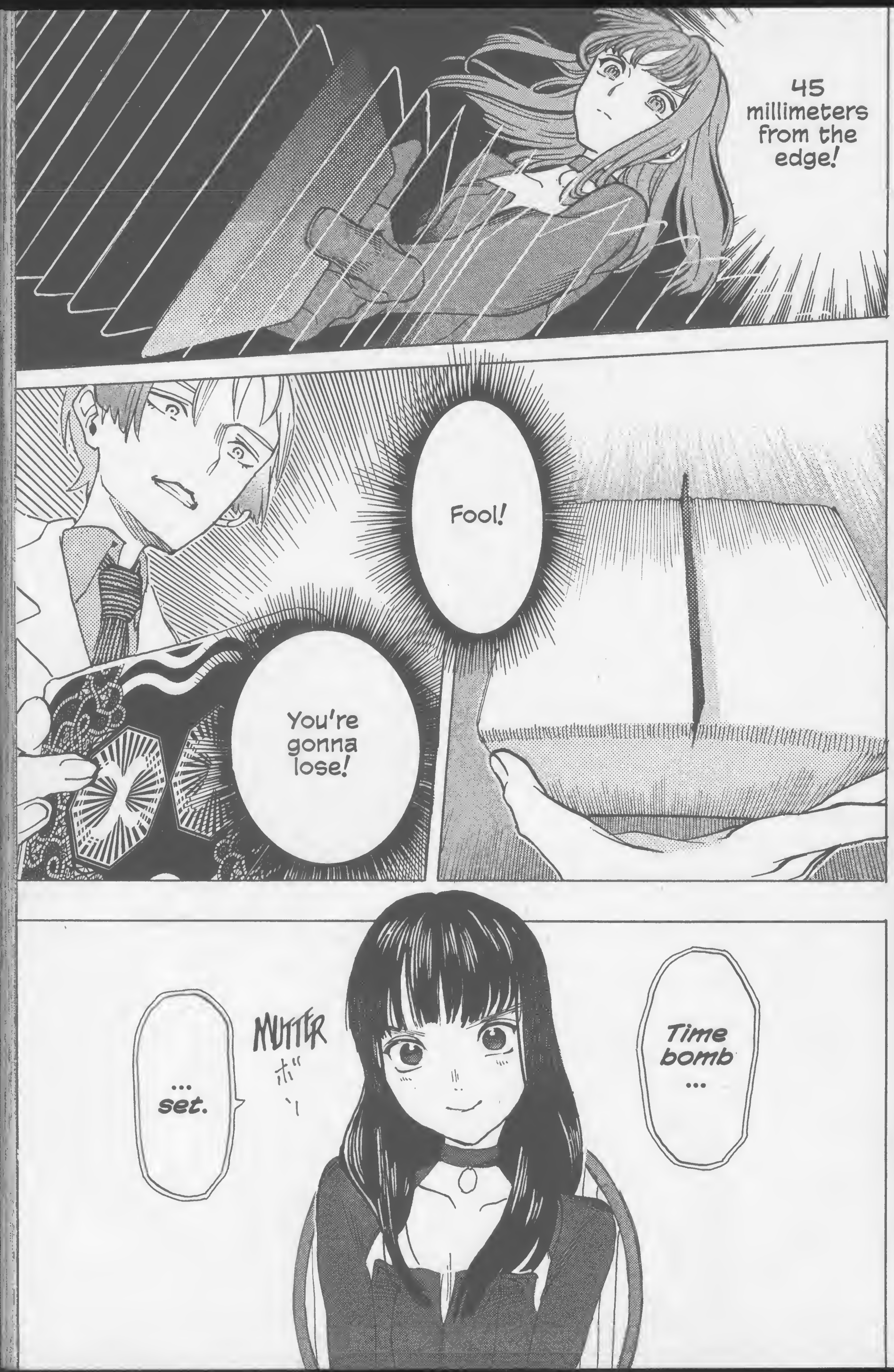

What a noble-hearted person.
Your heart is more beautiful than a shining diamond!
I did it!
Thank you.
Farewell.
Perfect.


There, there.
I'm... so moved... by your story.
Now it's time for the main dish.
But how shall I feed it to you?
You must have worked so hard...
FLIP
FLIP


...to give such a great performance.
SLAP


...What?
Hm?
Something wrong?
FLIP
N—no, it's nothing.
What did she just say? Does she know I'm acting? No way...
FLAP FLAP FLAP

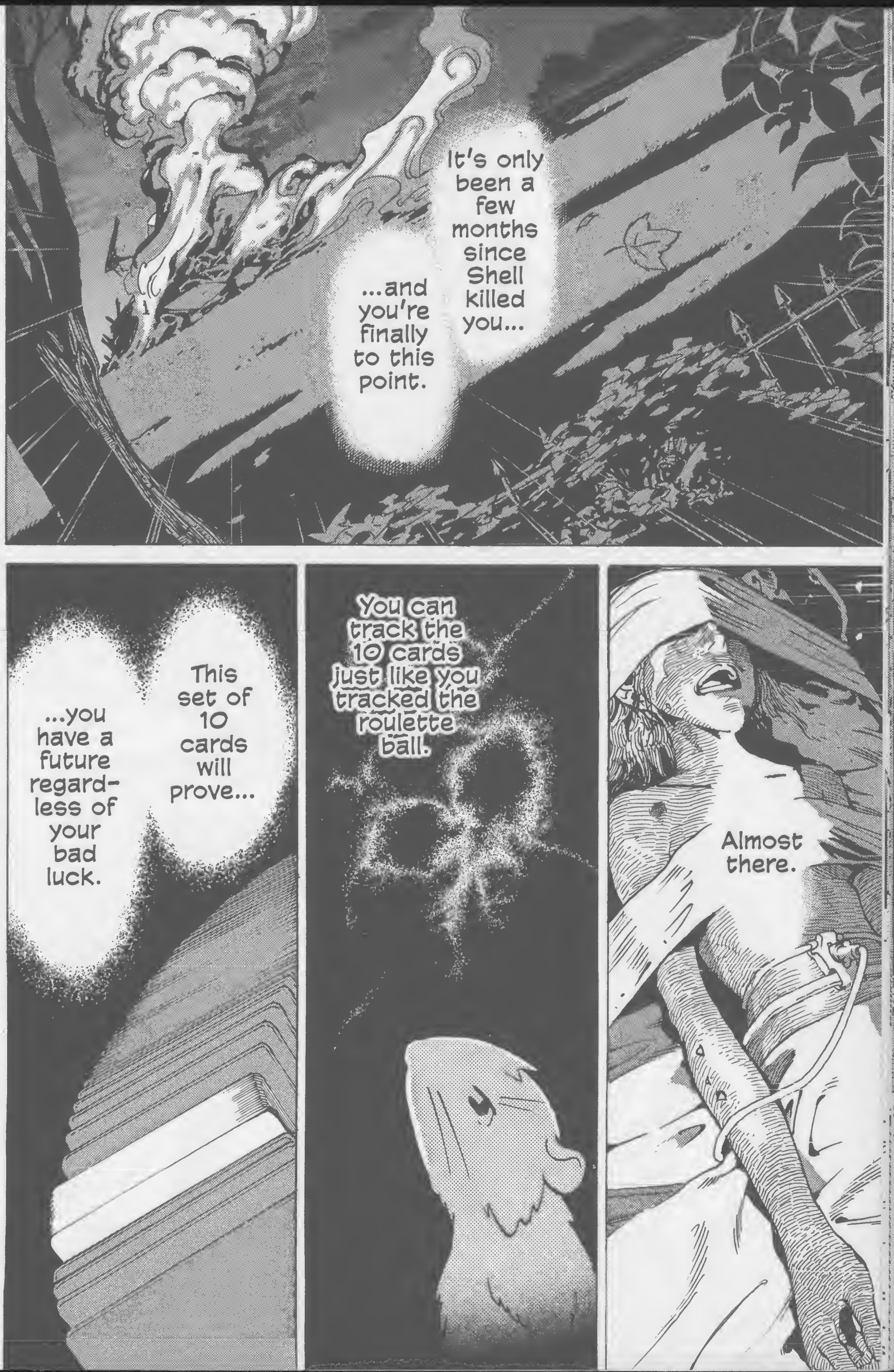

Interesting, Balot!
フッ HEH
A group of twenty 10 cards!
Please cut the cards.
Me!
SWITCH
I wanna try!
Hey, hey!
The dealer doesn't suspect a thing!
The middle is best, right?

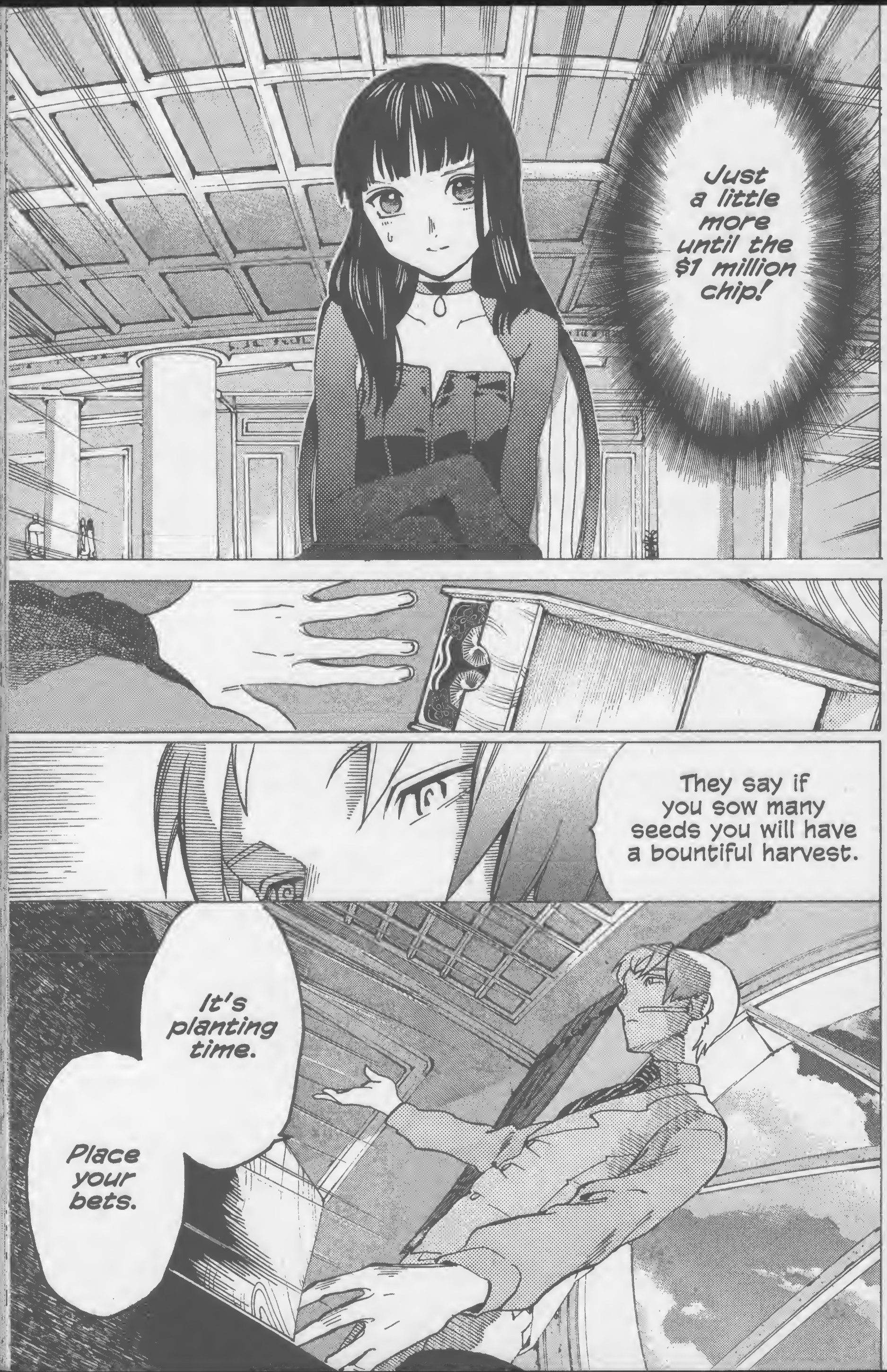

45 millimeters from the edge!
Fool!
You're gonna lose!
Time bomb ...
MUTTER
... set.

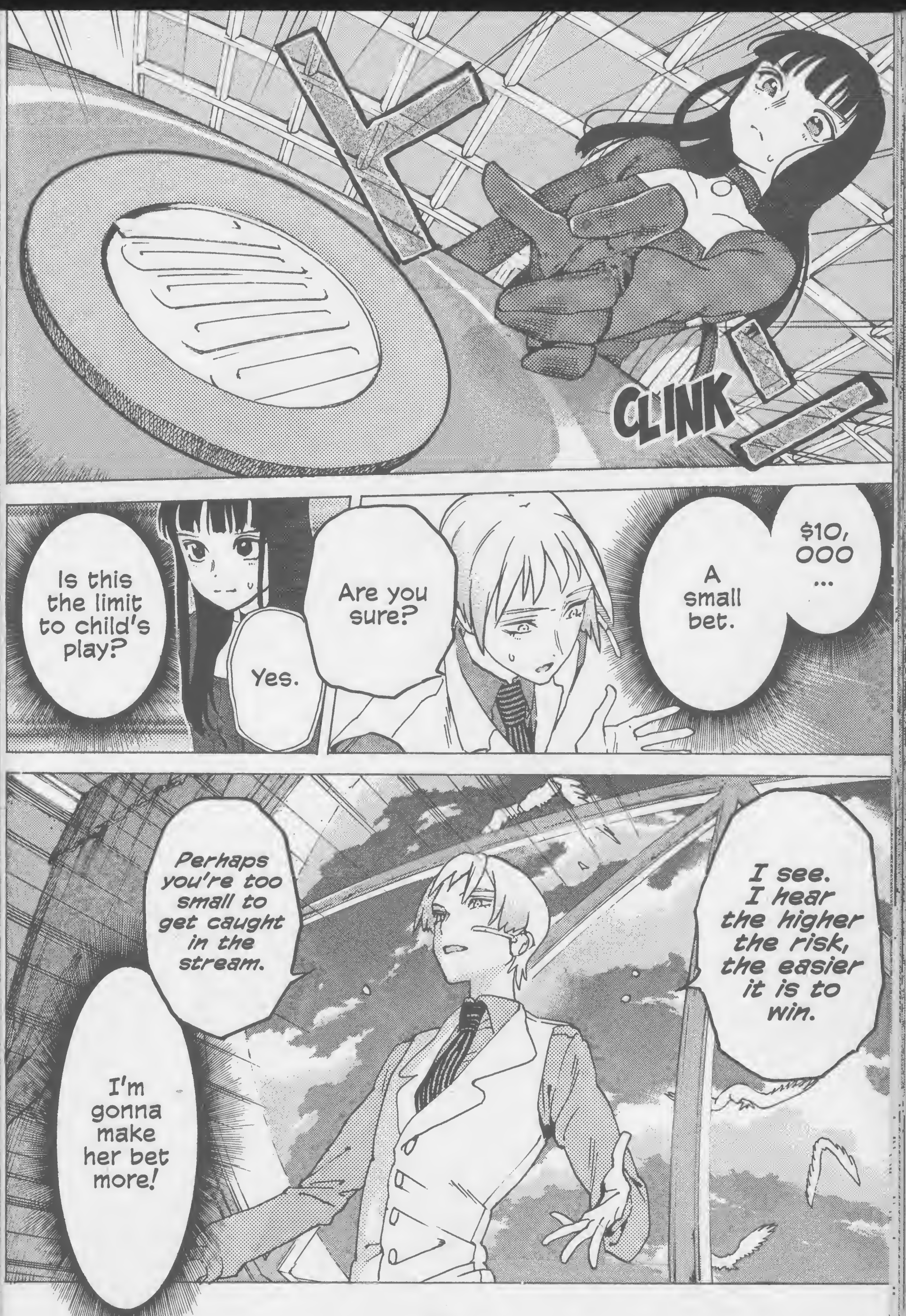
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

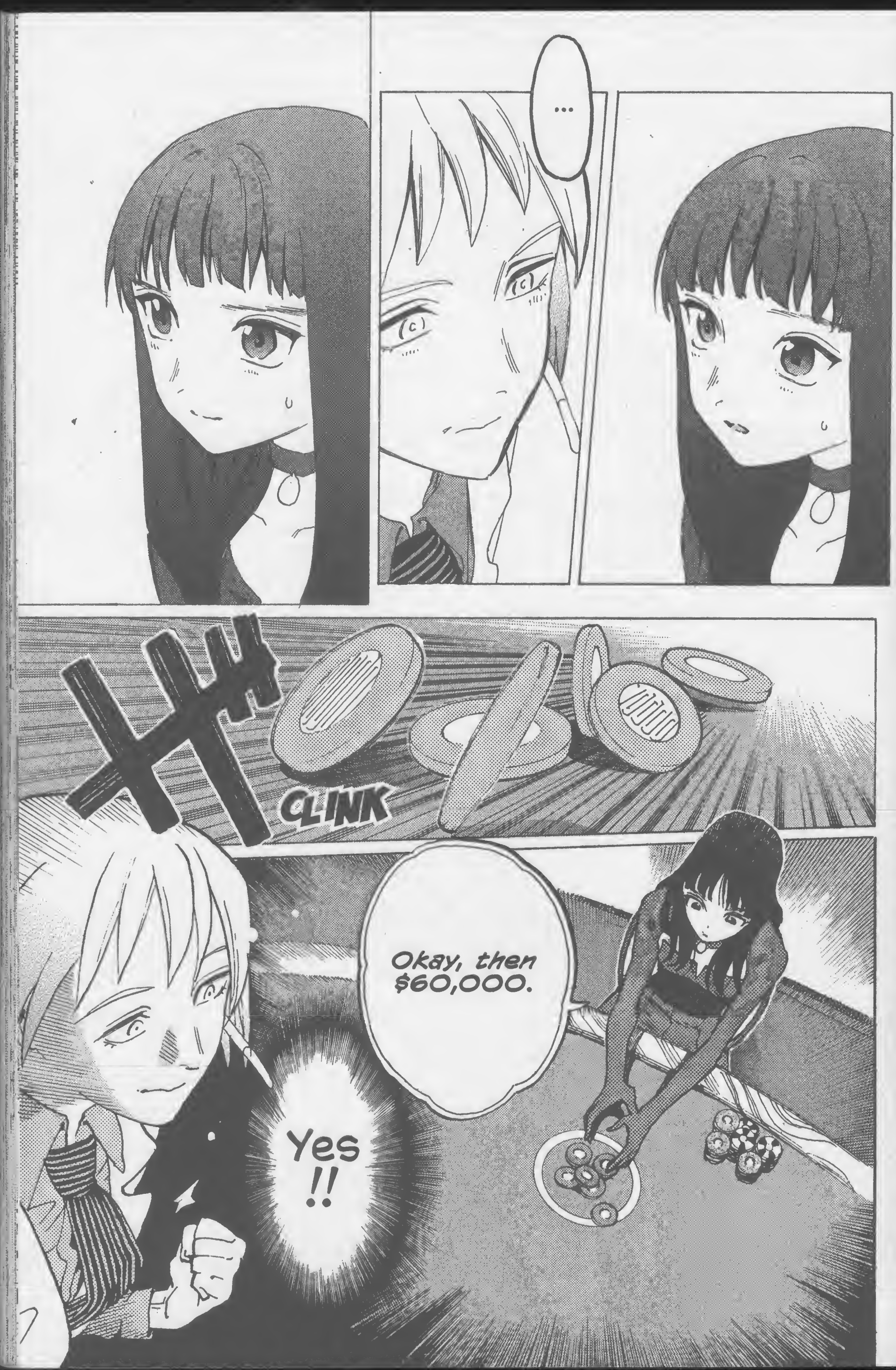
Chapter 22: Crank Shaft (2)

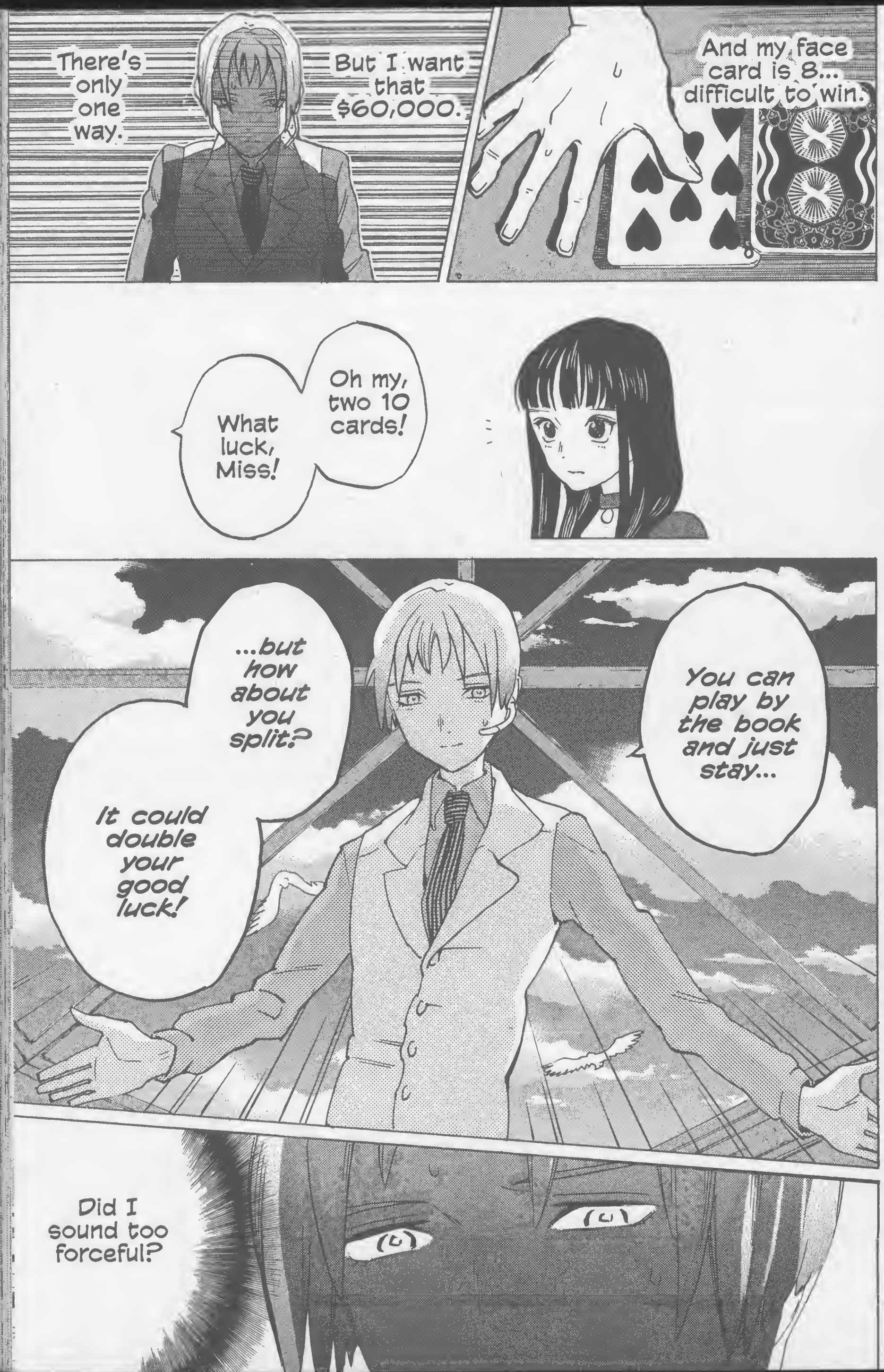
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

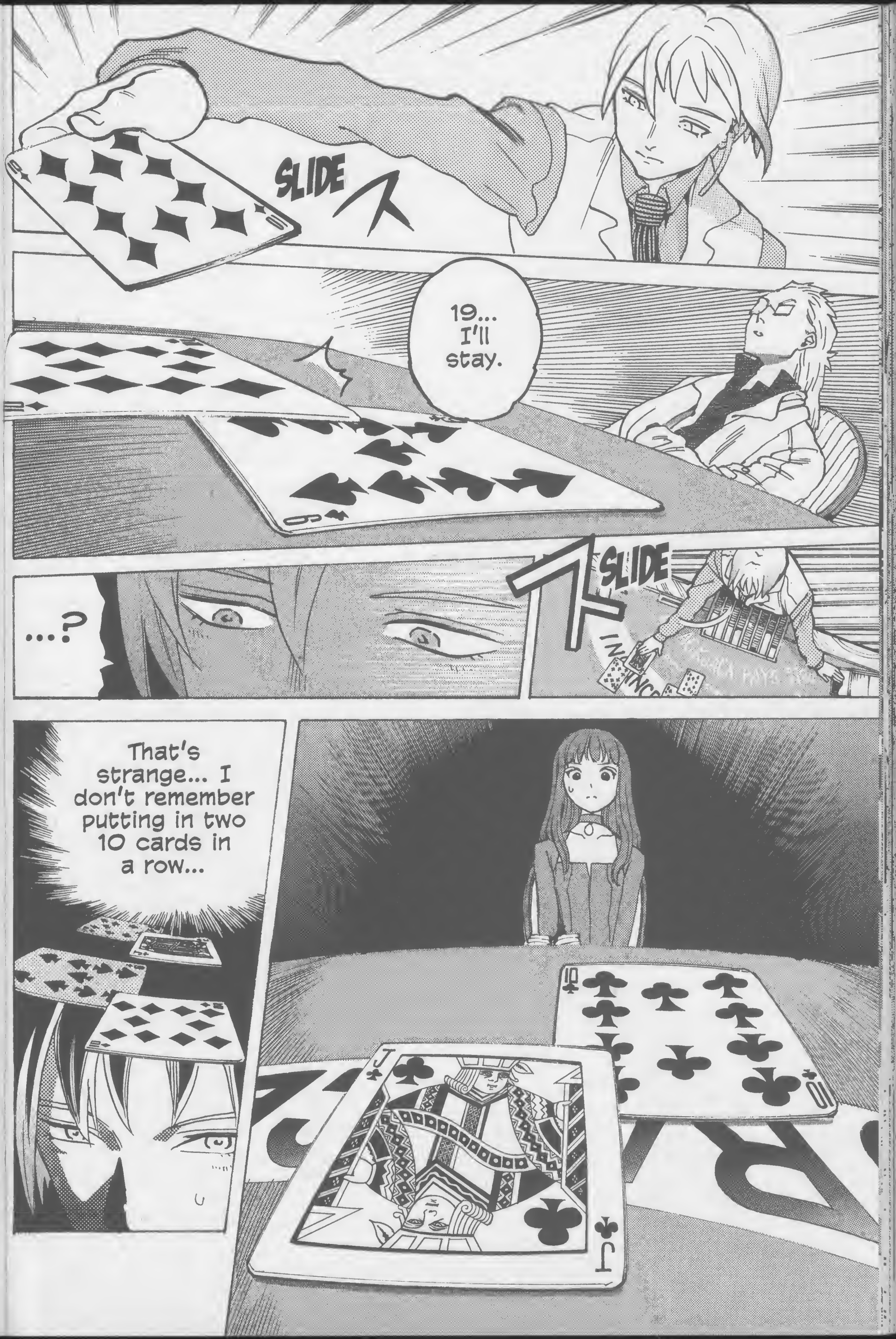

It's only been a few months since Shell killed you...
...and you're finally to this point.
Almost there.
You can track the 10 cards just like you tracked the roulette ball.
This set of 10 cards will prove...
...you have a future regardless of your bad luck.

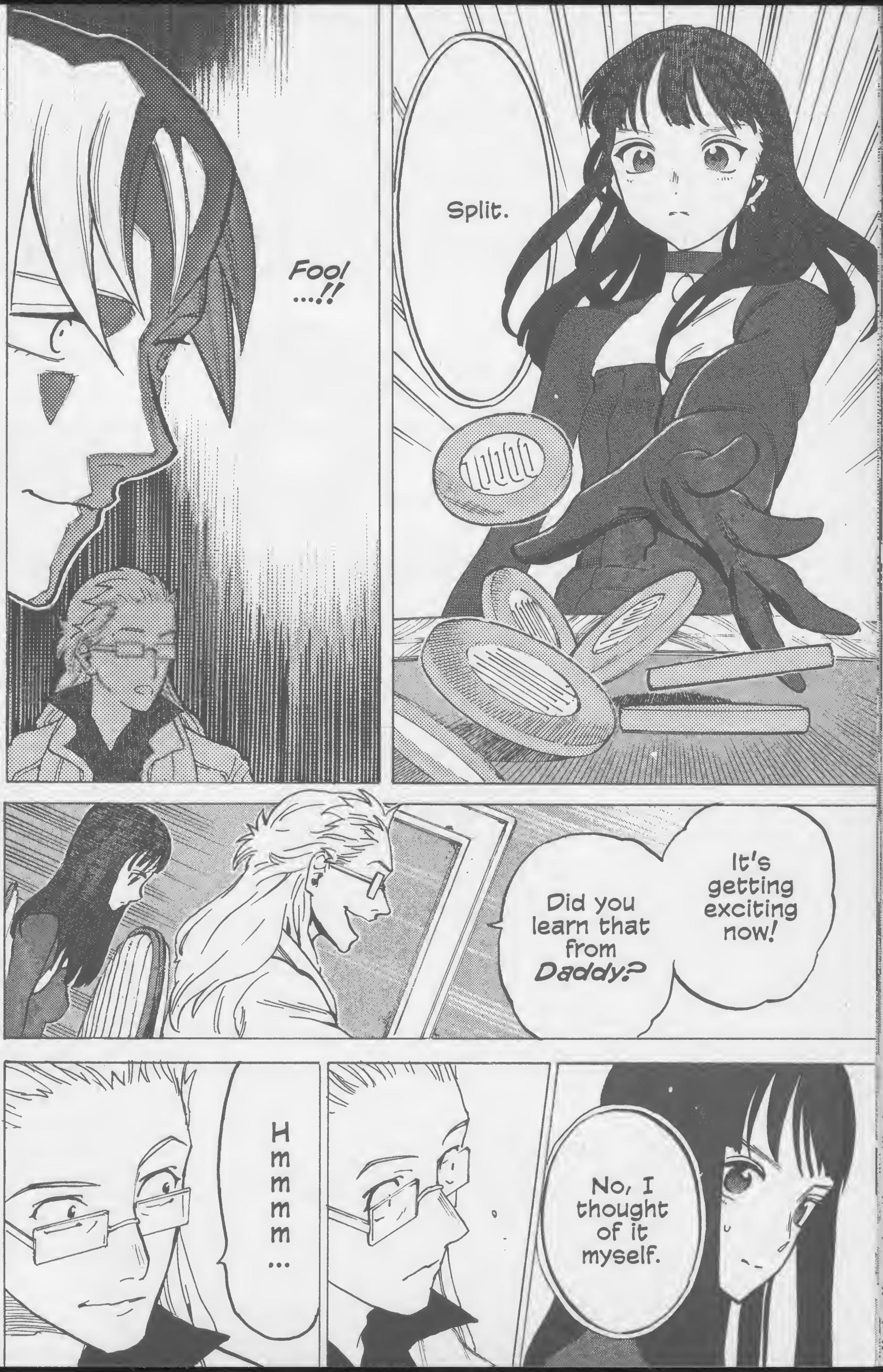

Just a little more until the $1 million chip!
They say if you sow many seeds you will have a bountiful harvest.
It's planting time.
Place your bets.

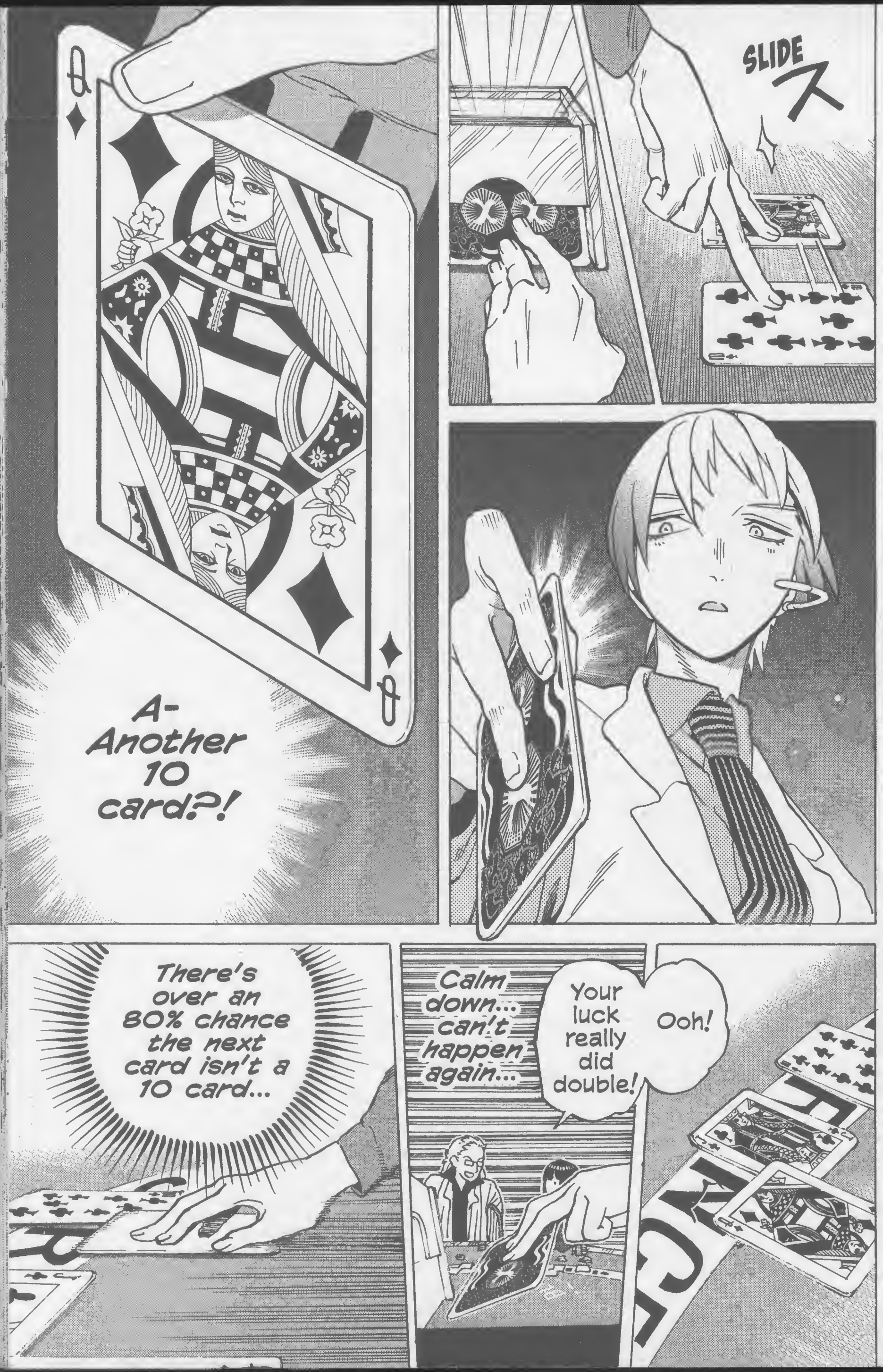

CLINK
$10, 000 ...
A small bet.
Are you sure?
Yes.
Is this the limit to child's play?
I see. I hear the higher the risk, the easier it is to win.
Perhaps you're too small to get caught in the stream.
I'm gonna make her bet more!

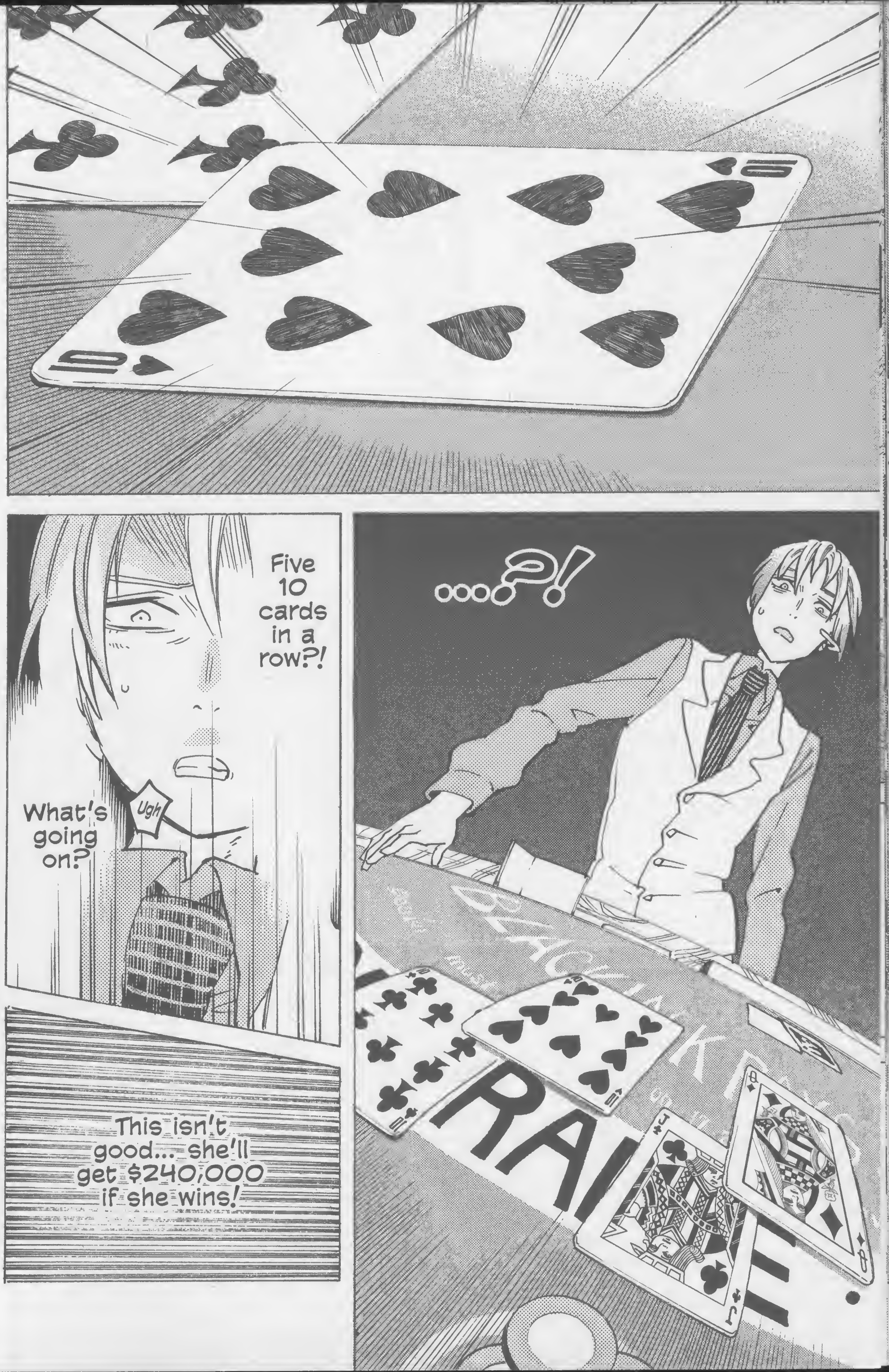

...
CLINK
Okay, then $60,000.
Yes !!

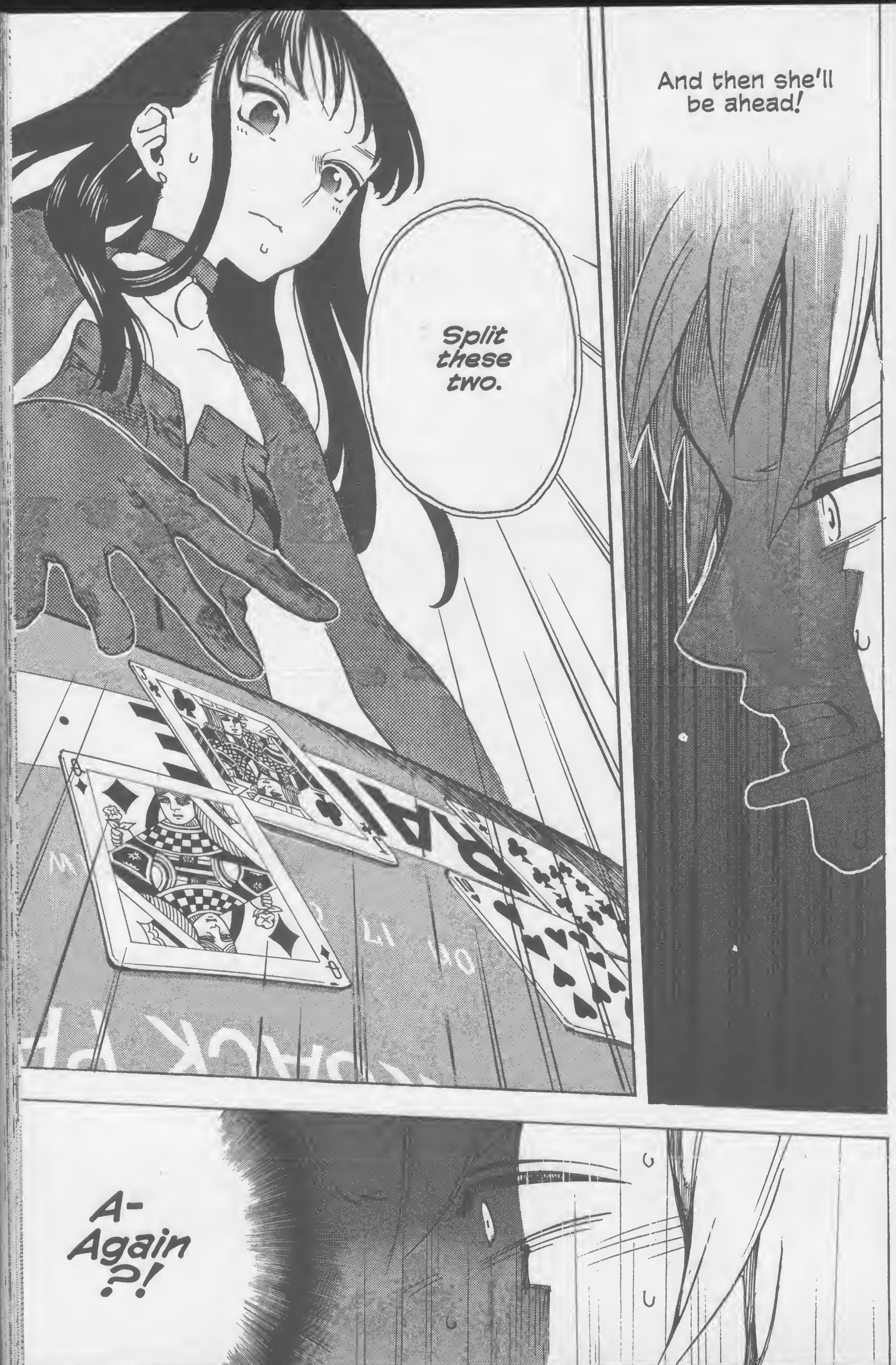

There's only one way.
But I want that $60,000.
And my face card is 8... difficult to win.
Oh my, two 10 cards!
What luck, Miss!
You can play by the book and just stay...
...but how about you split?
It could double your good luck!
Did I sound too forceful?

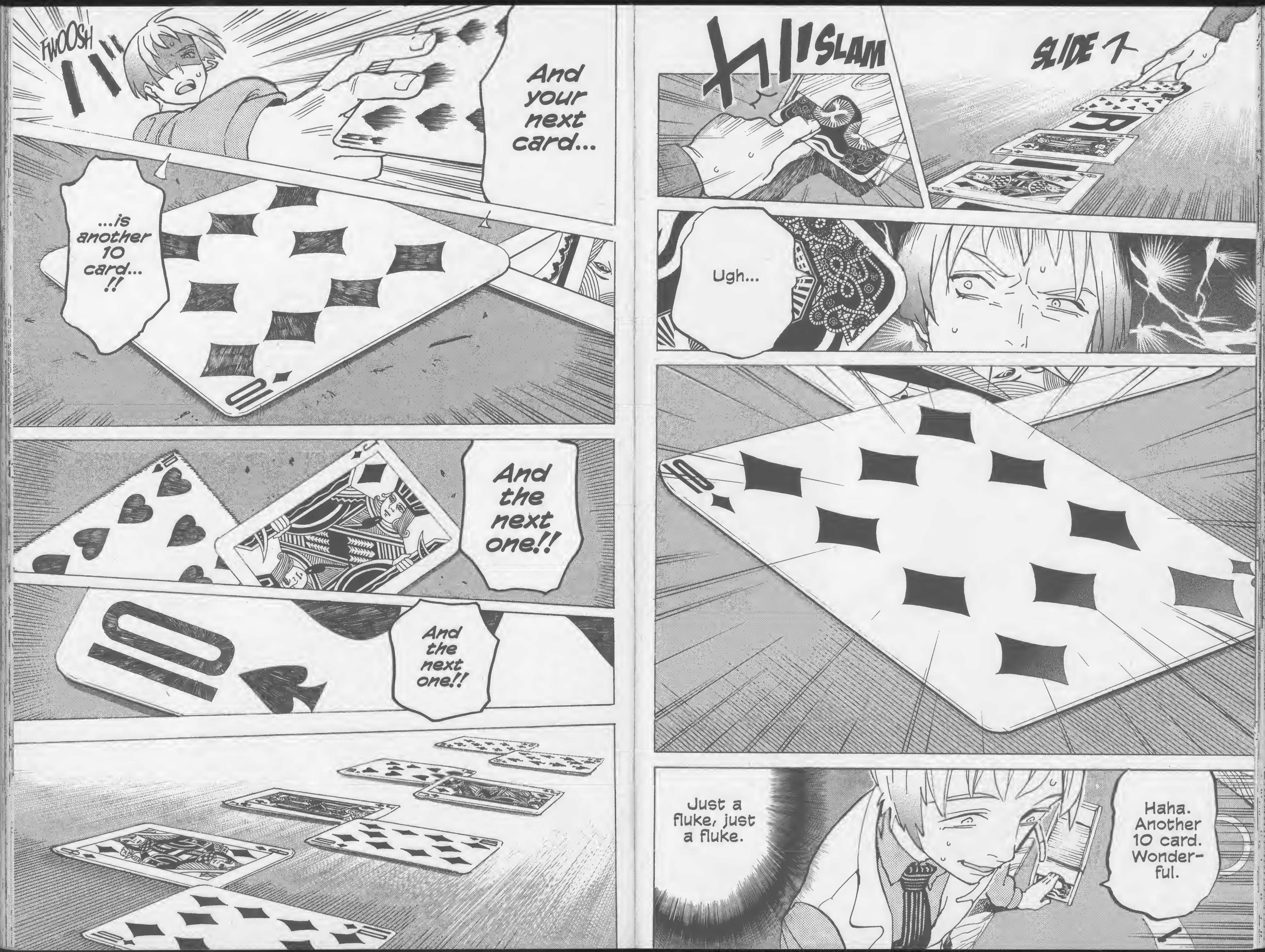

SLIDE
19... I'll stay.
...?
SLIDE
That's strange... I don't remember putting in two 10 cards in a row...

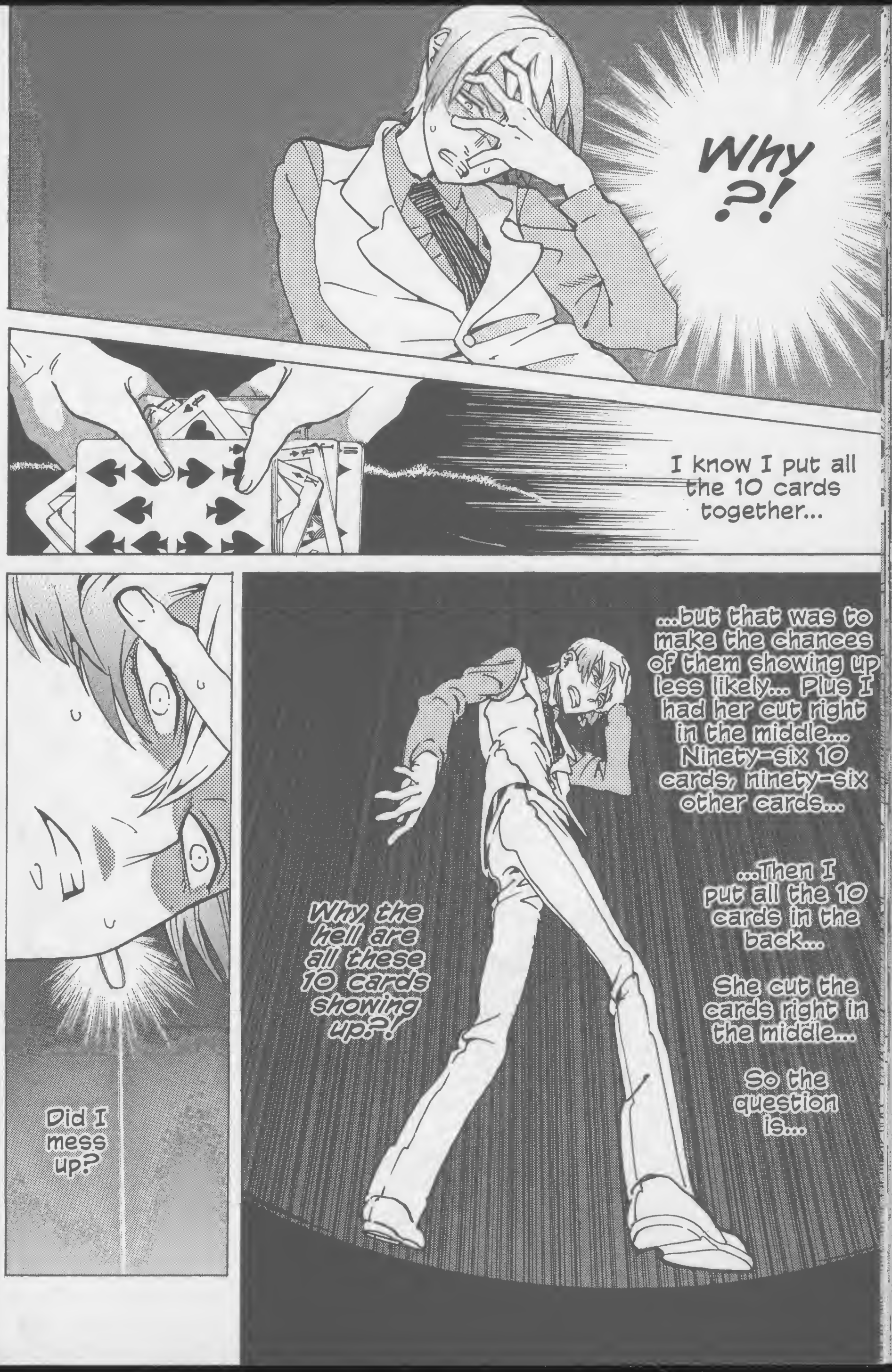

Split.
Fool ...!!
It's getting exciting now!
Did you learn that from Daddy?
No, I thought of it myself.
Hmmmm...

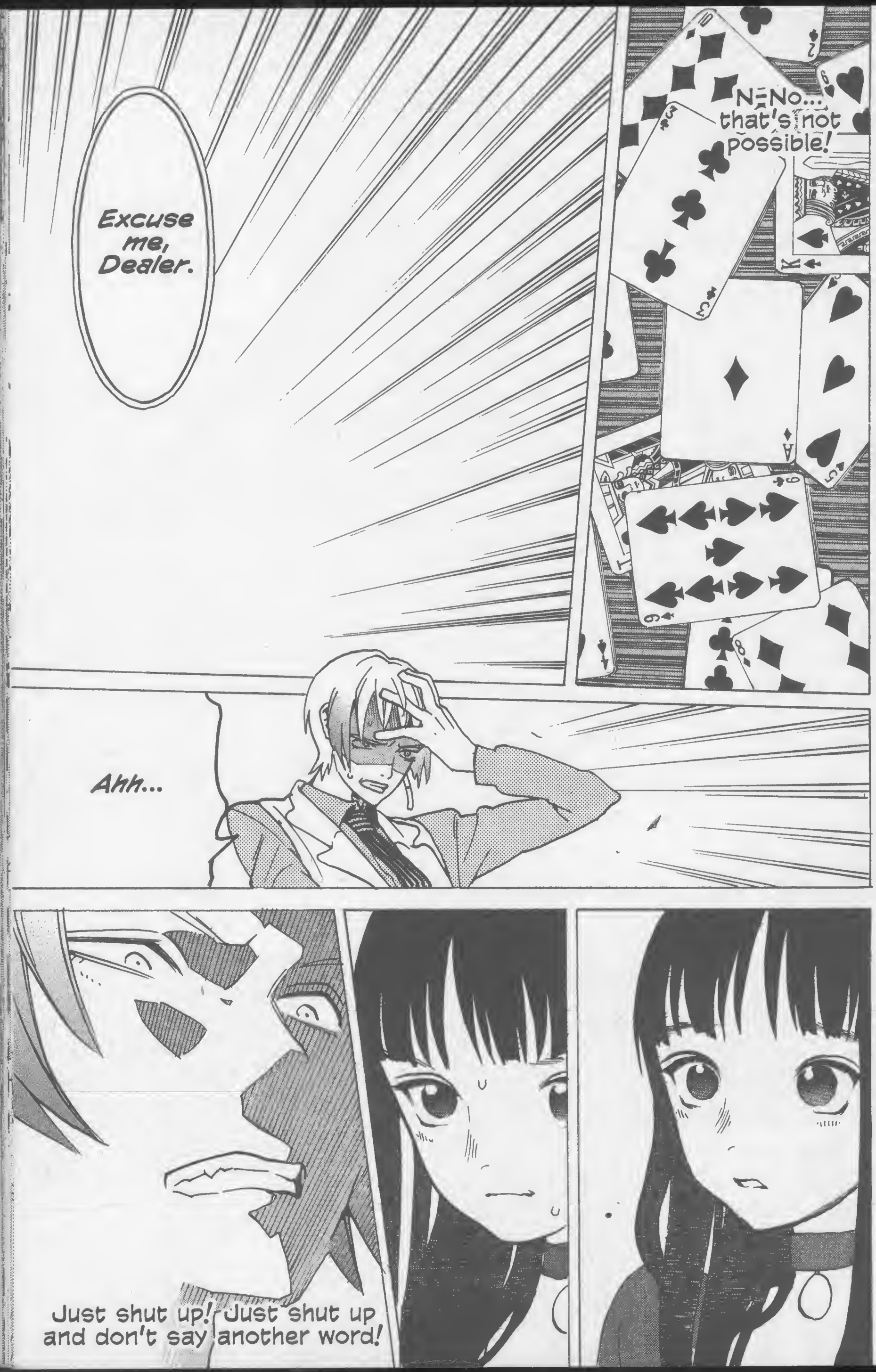

SLIDE ス
A- Another 10 card?!
Ooh!
Your luck really did double!
Calm down... can't happen again...
There's over an 80% chance the next card isn't a 10 card...

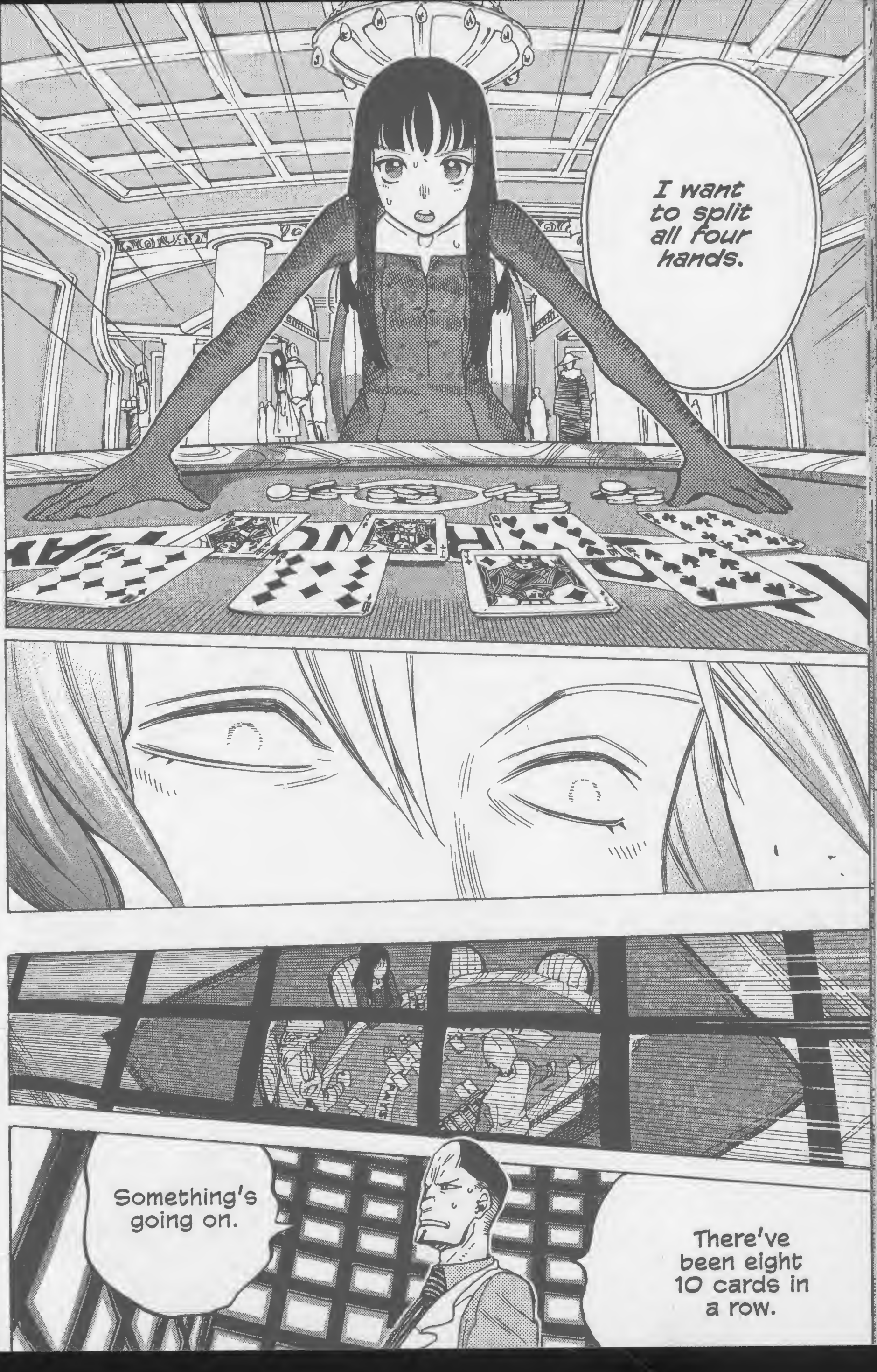

...?!
Five 10 cards in a row?!
Ugh
What's going on?
This isn't good... she'll get $240,000 if she wins!

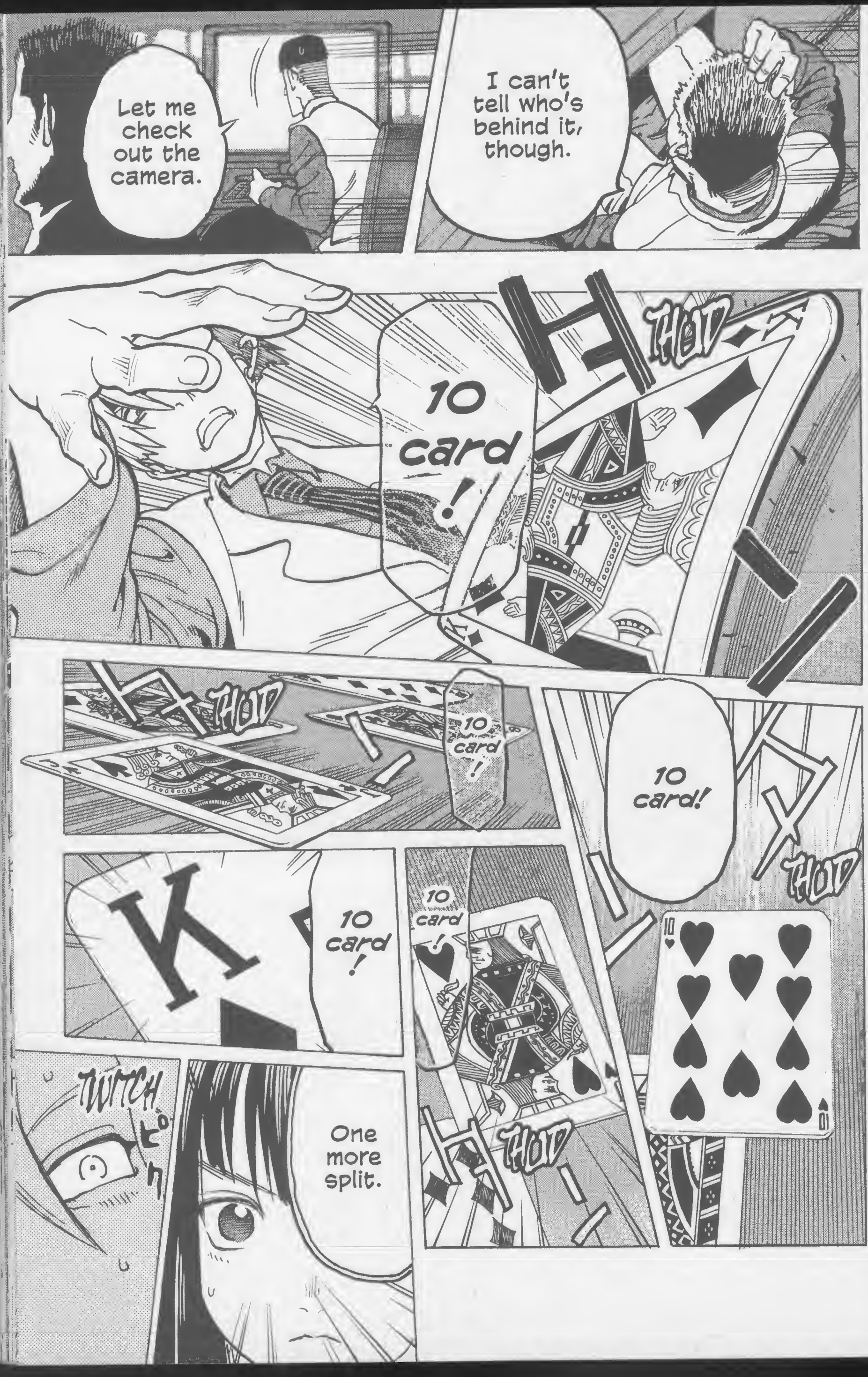

And then she'll be ahead!
Split these two.
A-Again?!

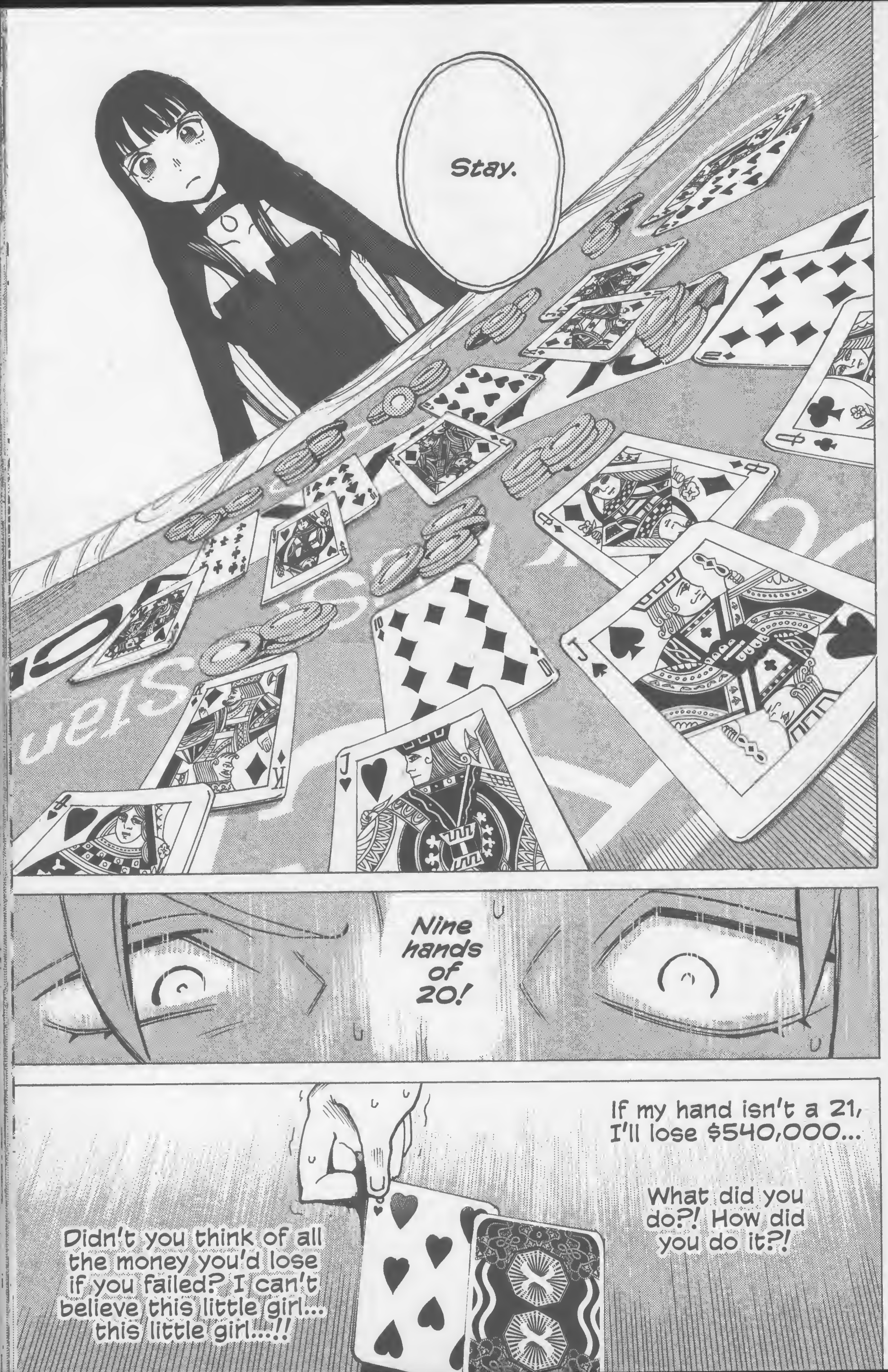

SLIDE
SLAM
Ugh...
Haha. Another 10 card. Wonderful.
Just a fluke, just a fluke.
FWOOSH
And your next card...
...is another 10 card...!!
And the next one!!
And the next one!!

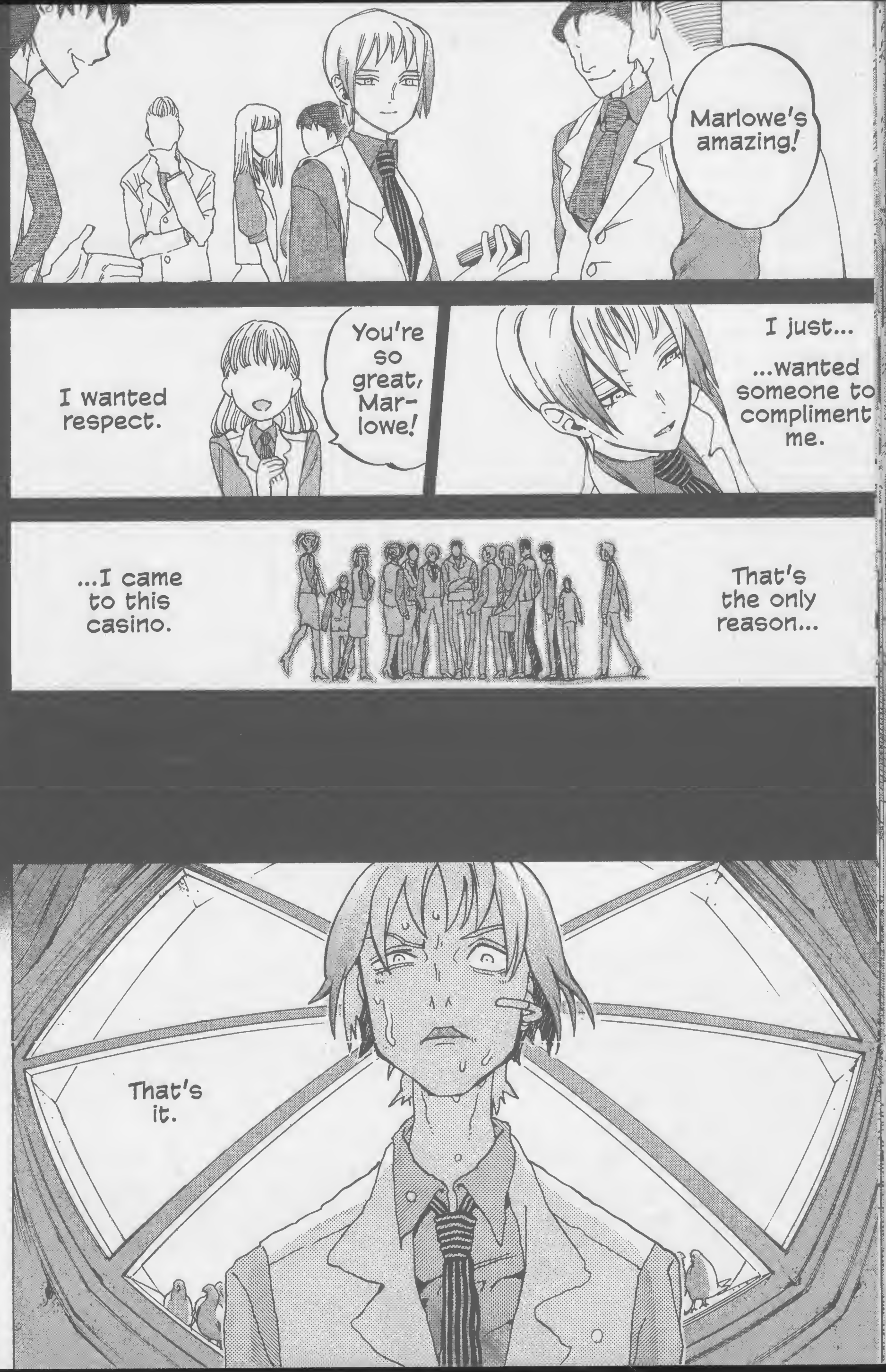

Why?!
I know I put all the 10 cards together...
...but that was to make the chances of them showing up less likely... Plus I had her cut right in the middle... Ninety-six 10 cards, ninety-six other cards...
...Then I put all the 10 cards in the back...
She cut the cards right in the middle...
So the question is...
Why the hell are all these 10 cards showing up?!
Did I mess up?

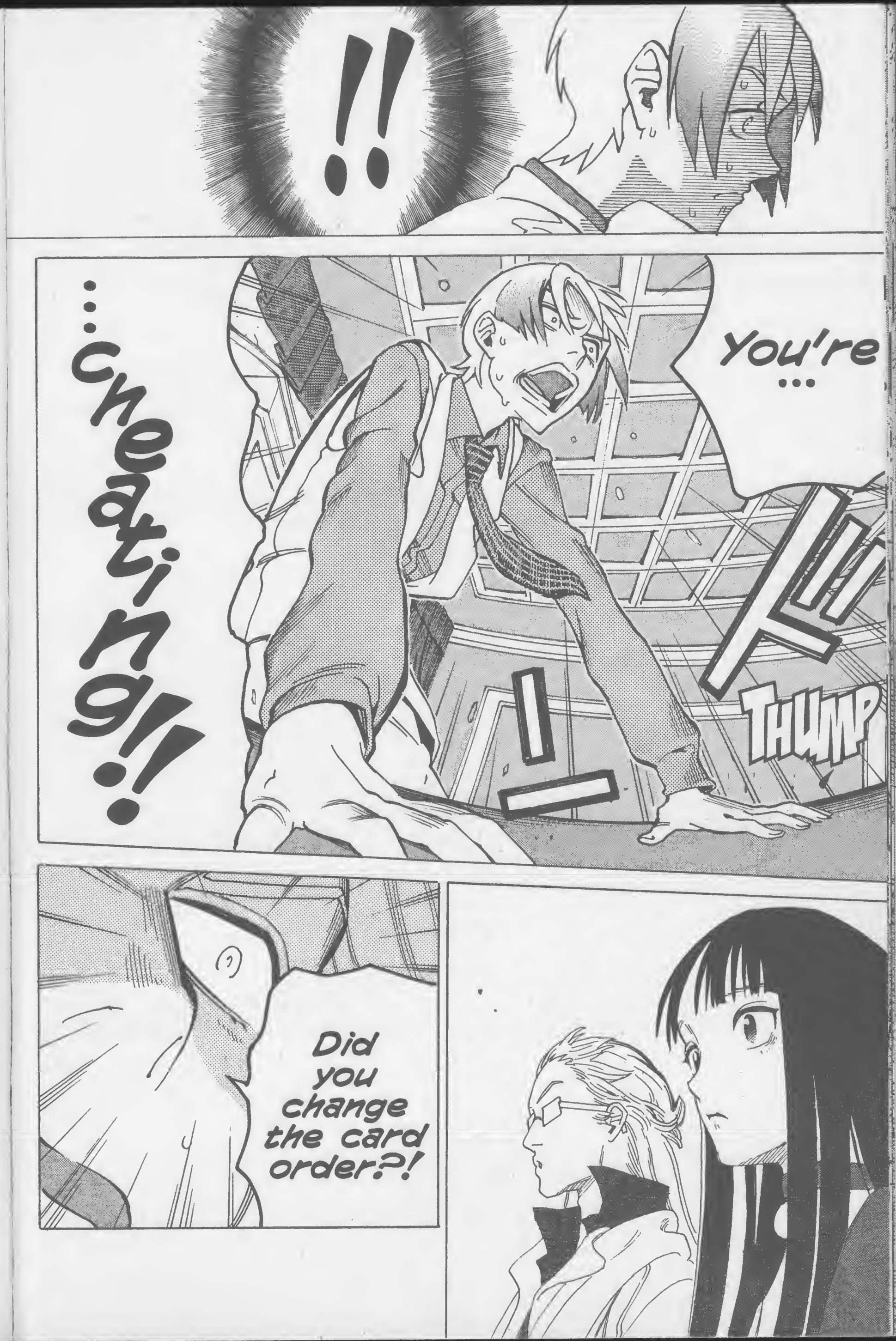

N-No... that's not possible!
Excuse me, Dealer.
Ahh...
Just shut up! Just shut up and don't say another word!

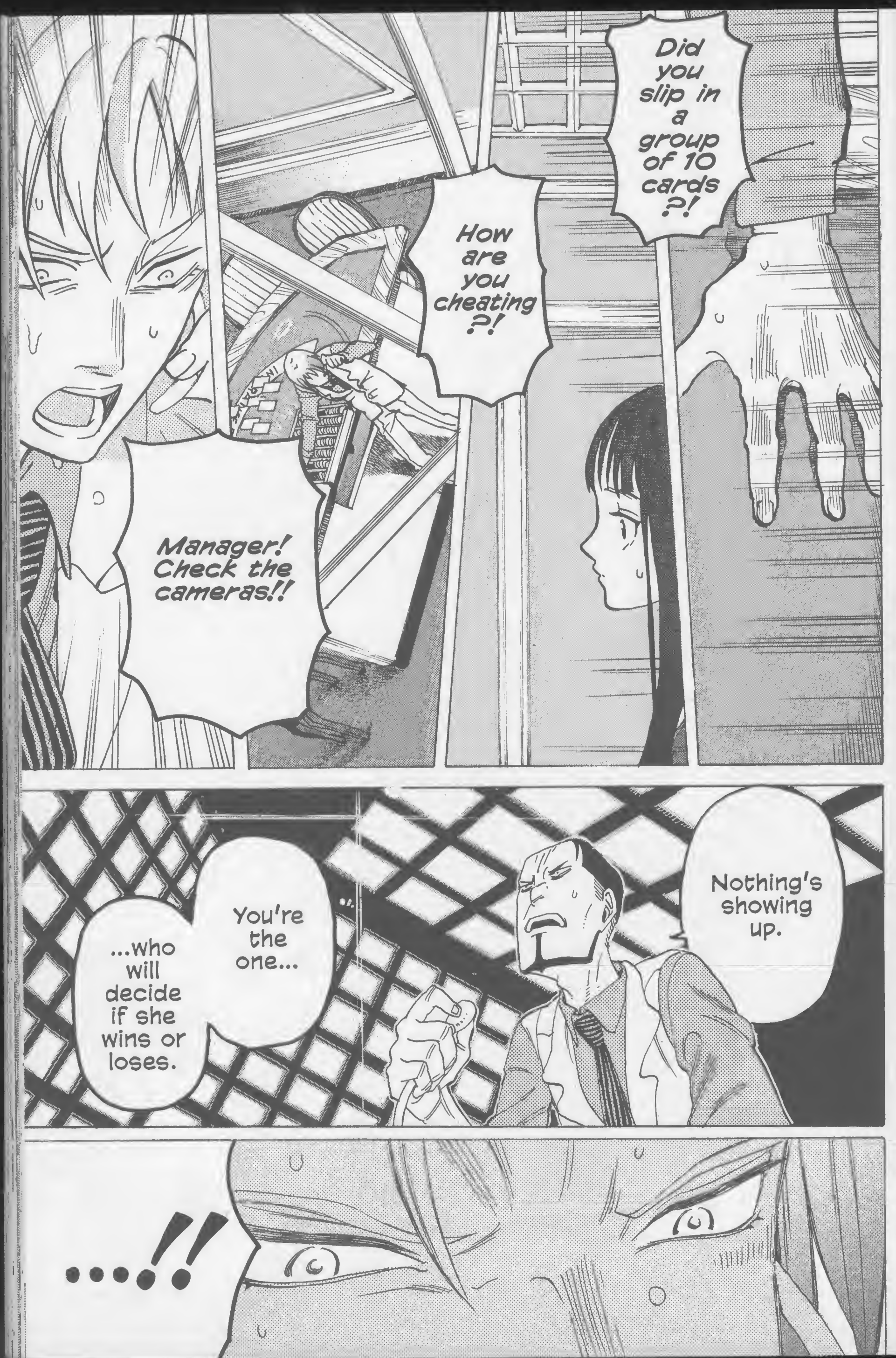

I want to split all four hands.
Something's going on.
There've been eight 10 cards in a row.

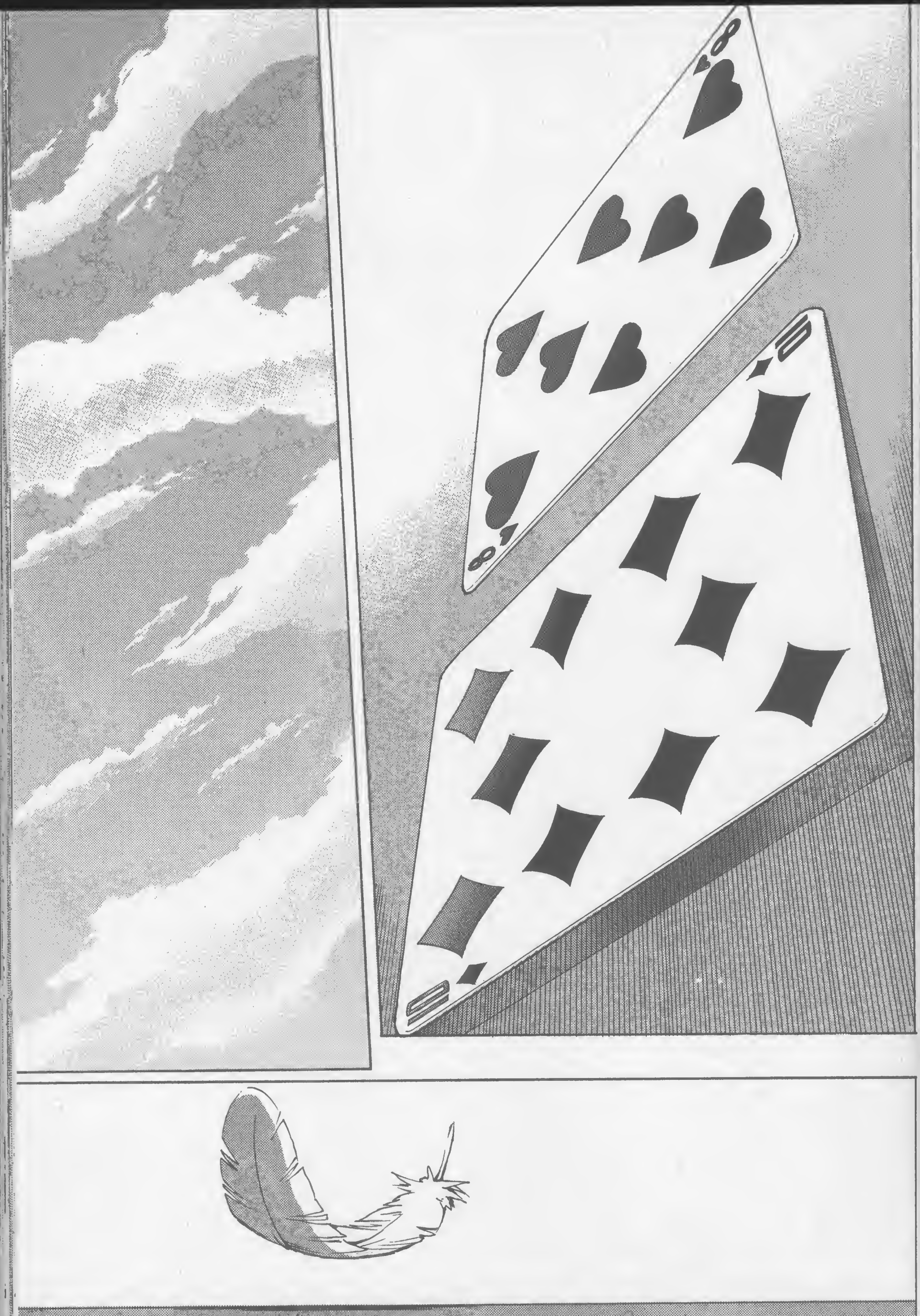

I can't tell who's behind it, though.
Let me check out the camera.
THUD
10 card!
10 card!
THUD
THUD
10 card!
THUD
10 card!
10 card!
TWITCH ピク
One more split.

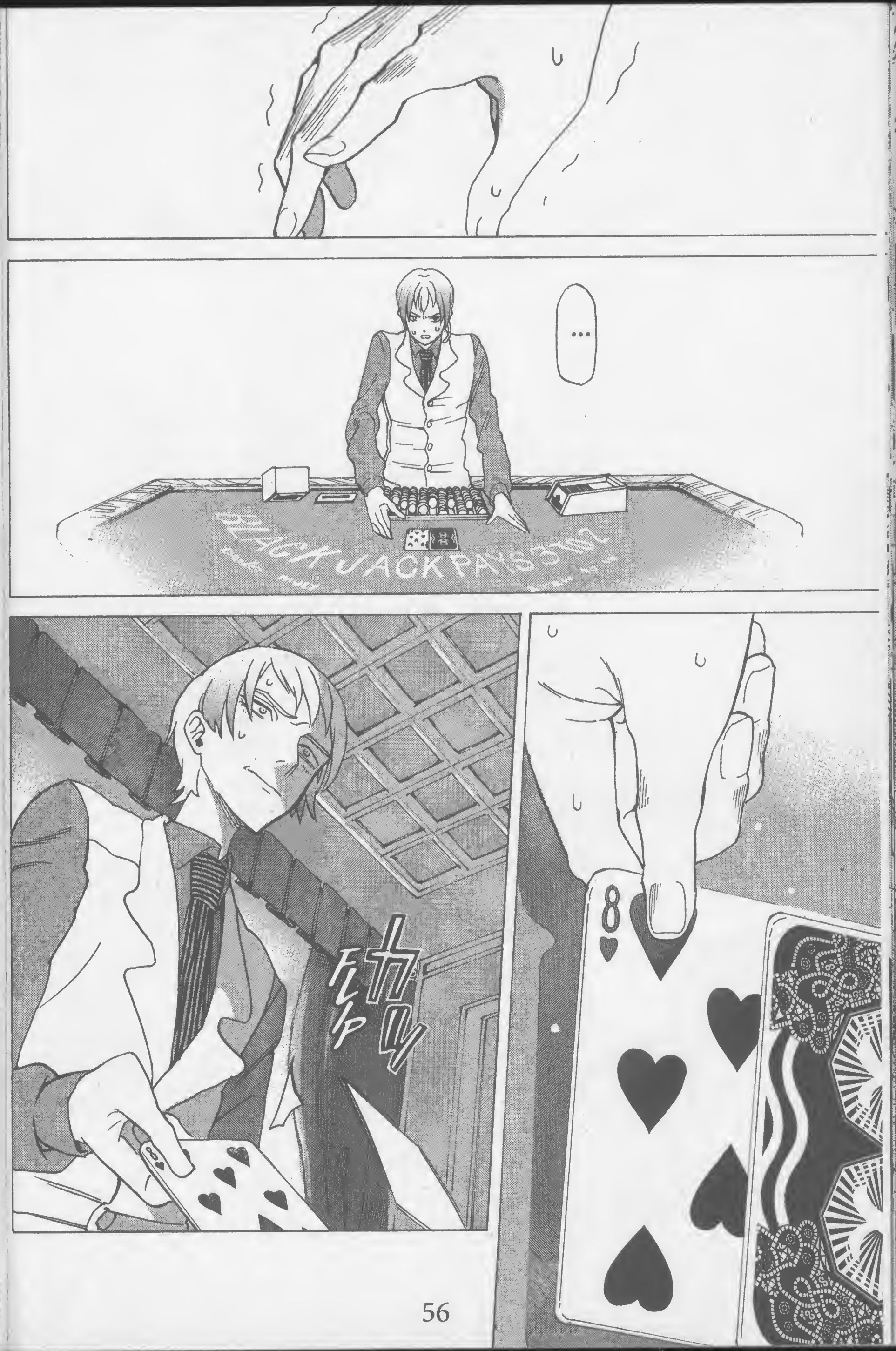

Stay.
Nine hands of 20!
If my hand isn't a 21, I'll lose $540,000...
What did you do?! How did you do it?!
Didn't you think of all the money you'd lose if you failed? I can't believe this little girl... this little girl...!!

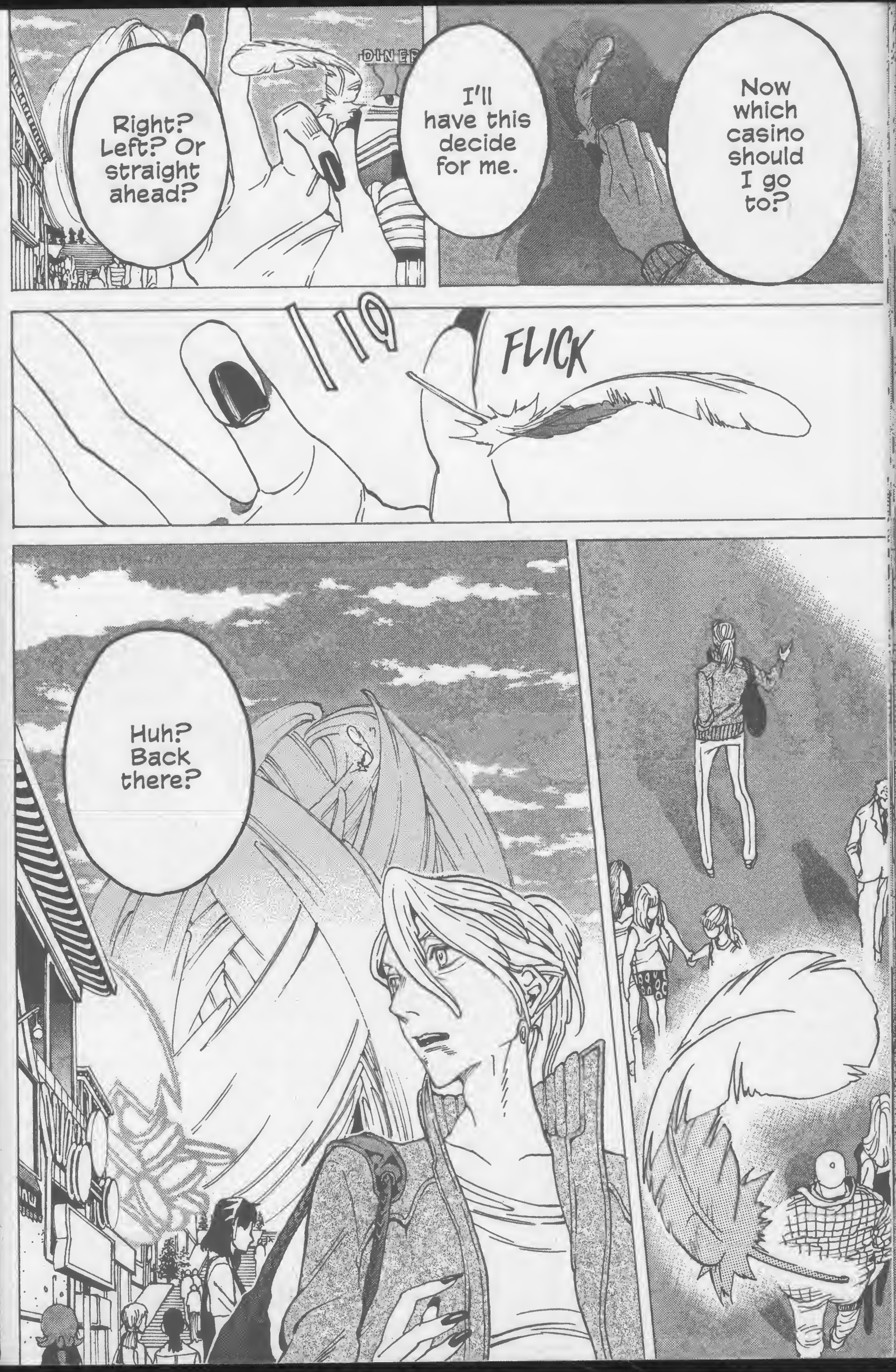

Marlowe's amazing!
I just...
...wanted someone to compliment me.
You're so great, Marlowe!
I wanted respect.
That's the only reason...
...I came to this casino.
That's it.

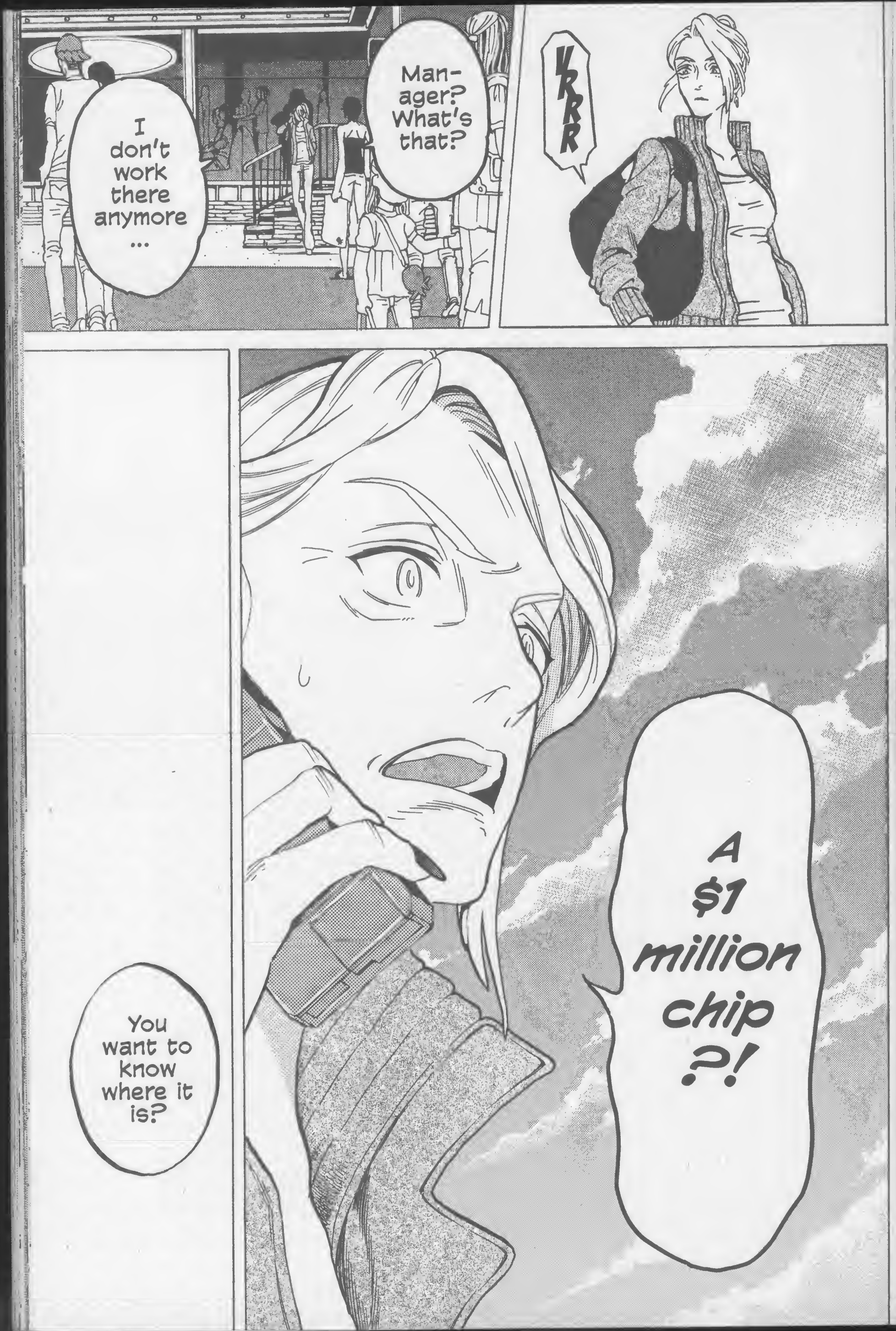

!!
You're...
...cheating!!
THUMP
Did you change the card order?!

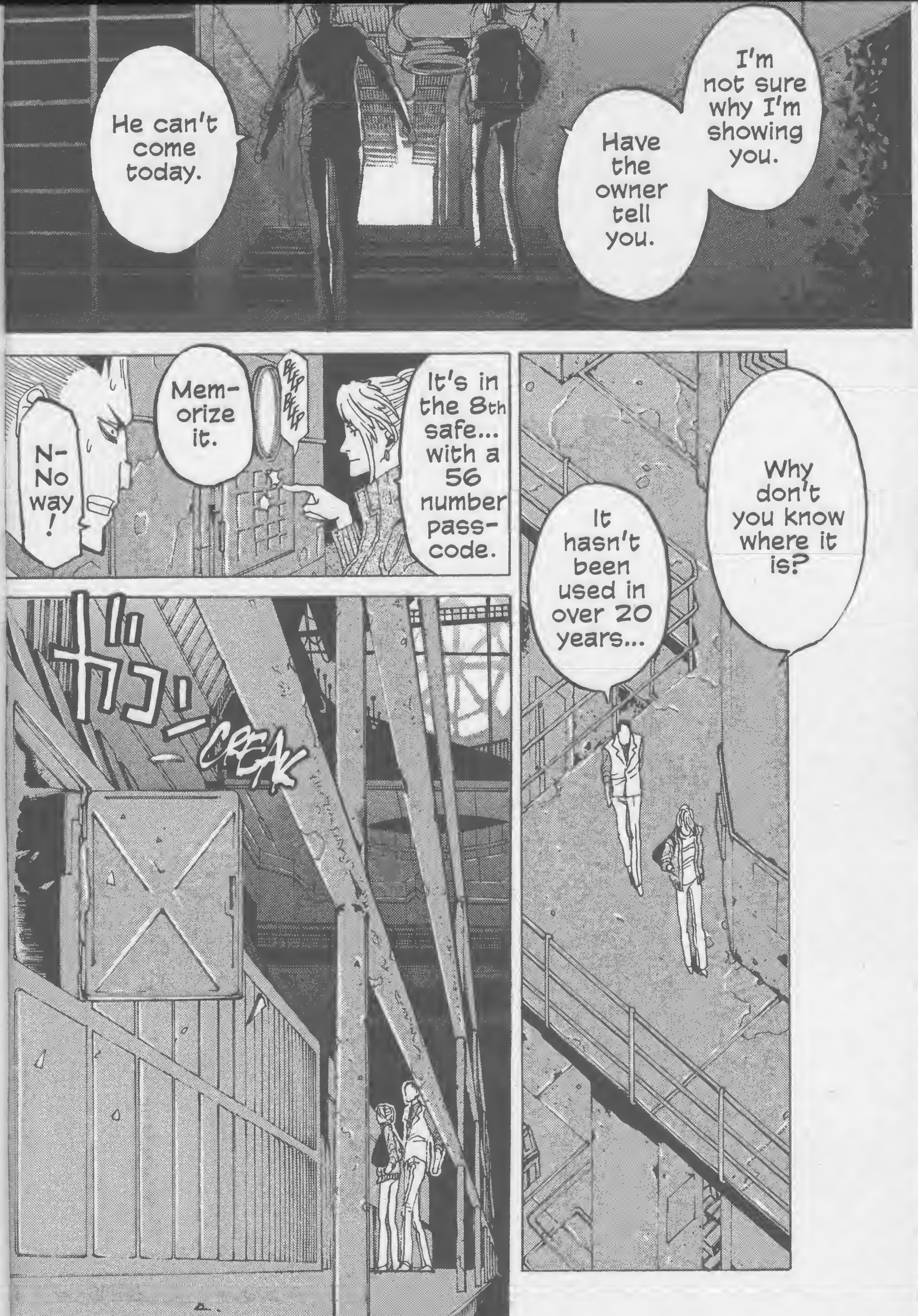

Did you slip in a group of 10 cards?!
How are you cheating?!
Manager! Check the cameras!!
Nothing's showing up.
You're the one...
...who will decide if she wins or loses.
...!!

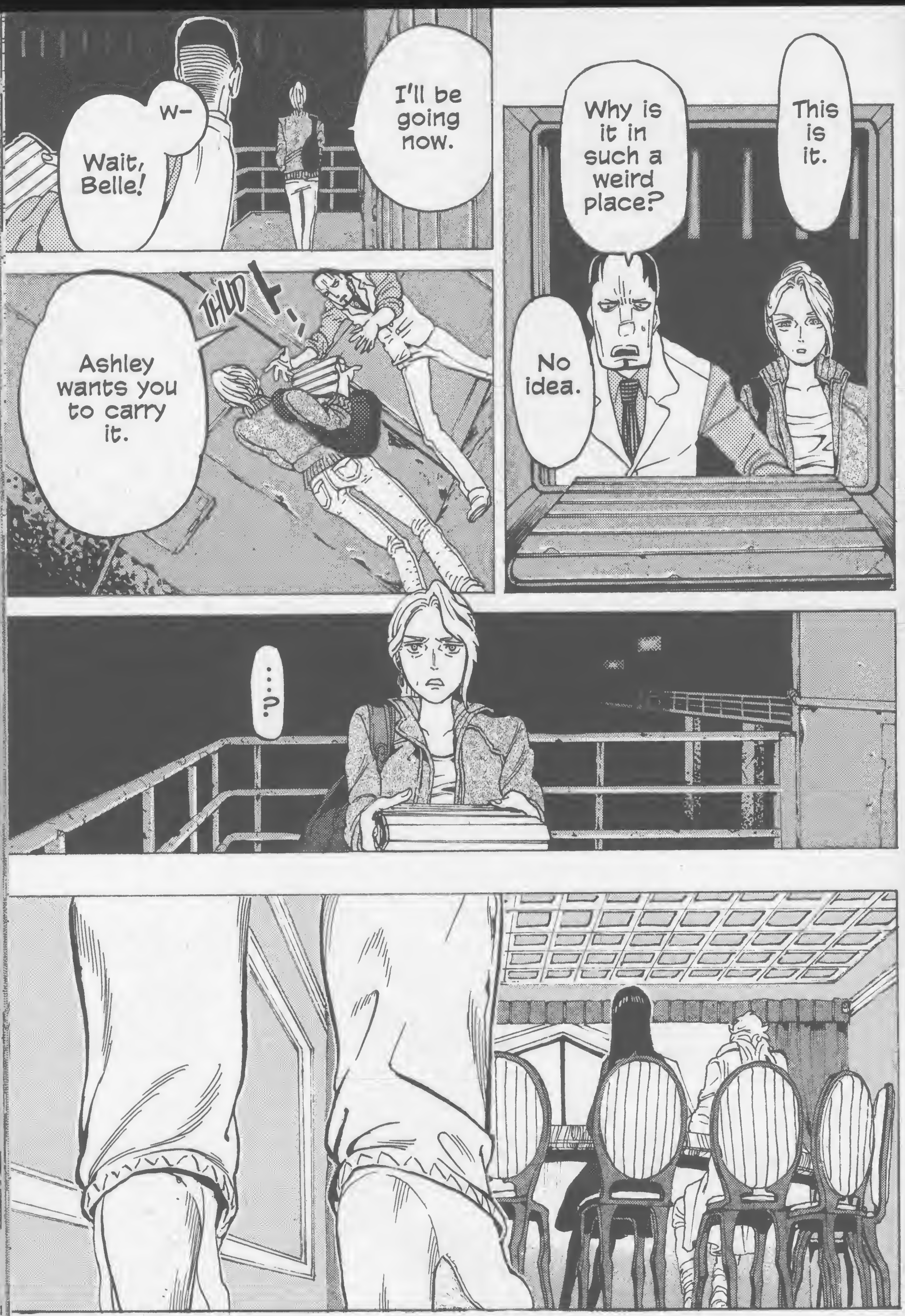


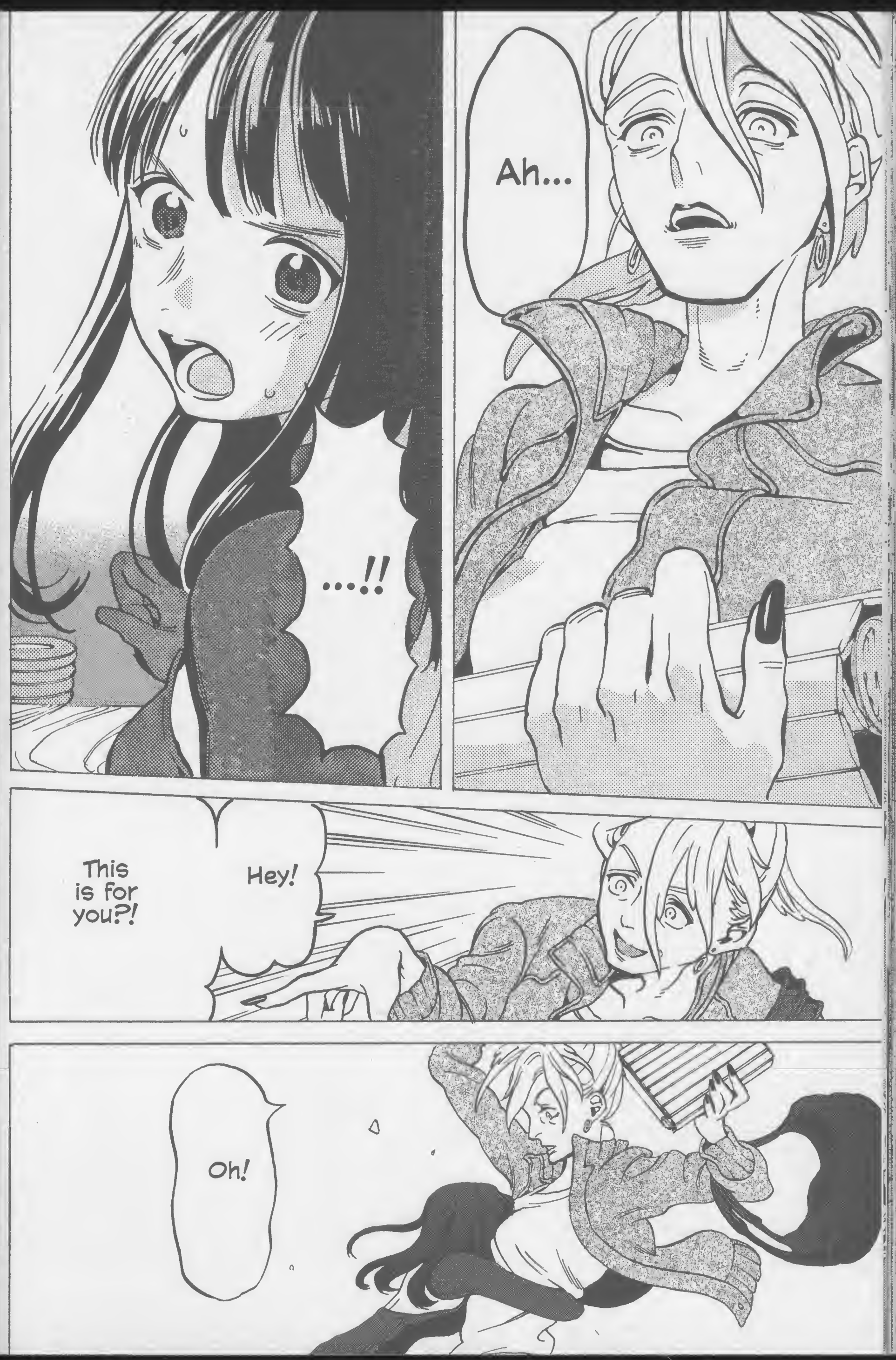

…
BLACK JACK PAYS 3 TO 2
カツ
Flip

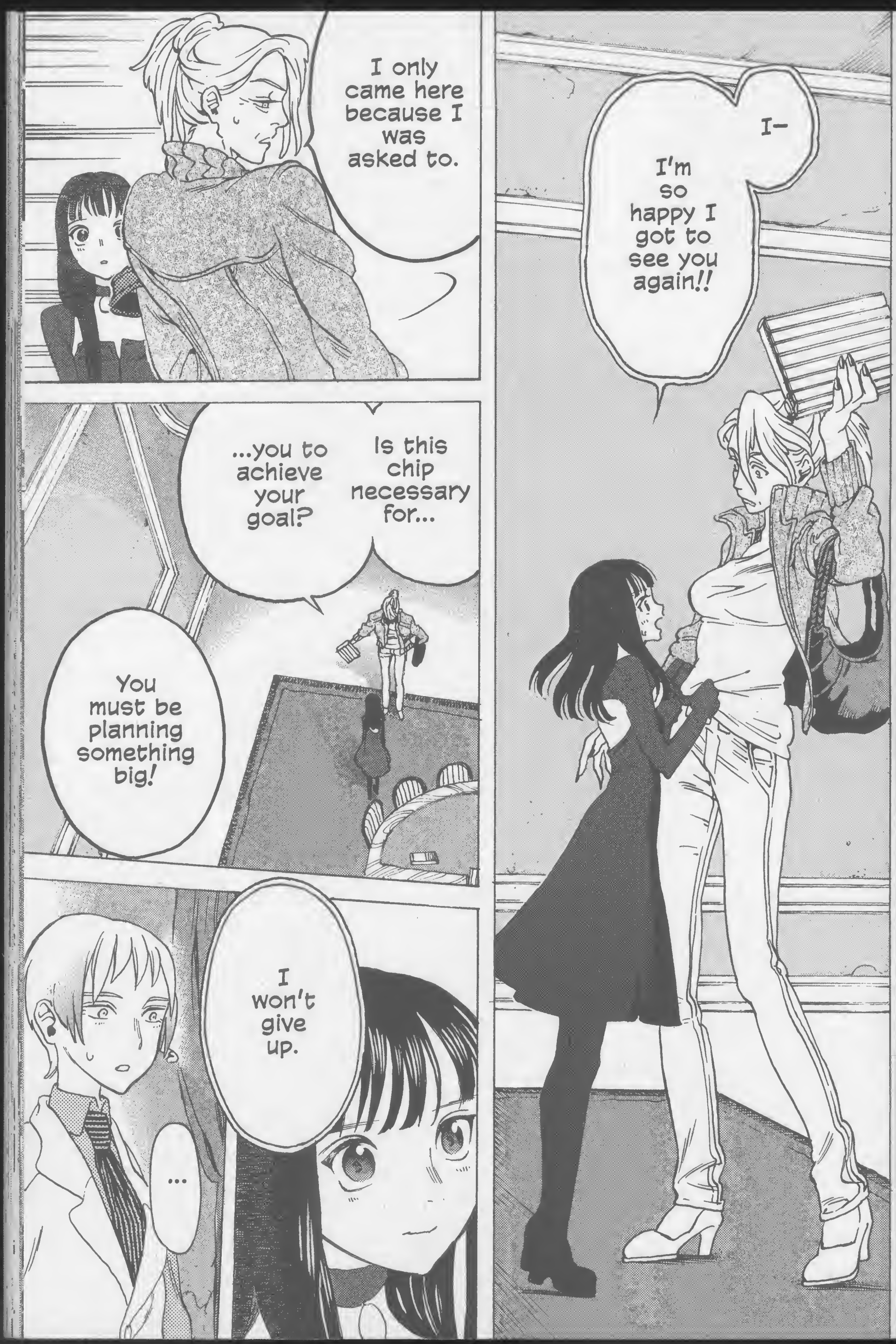

Now which casino should I go to?
I'll have this decide for me.
DINER
Right? Left? Or straight ahead?
FLICK
Huh? Back there?

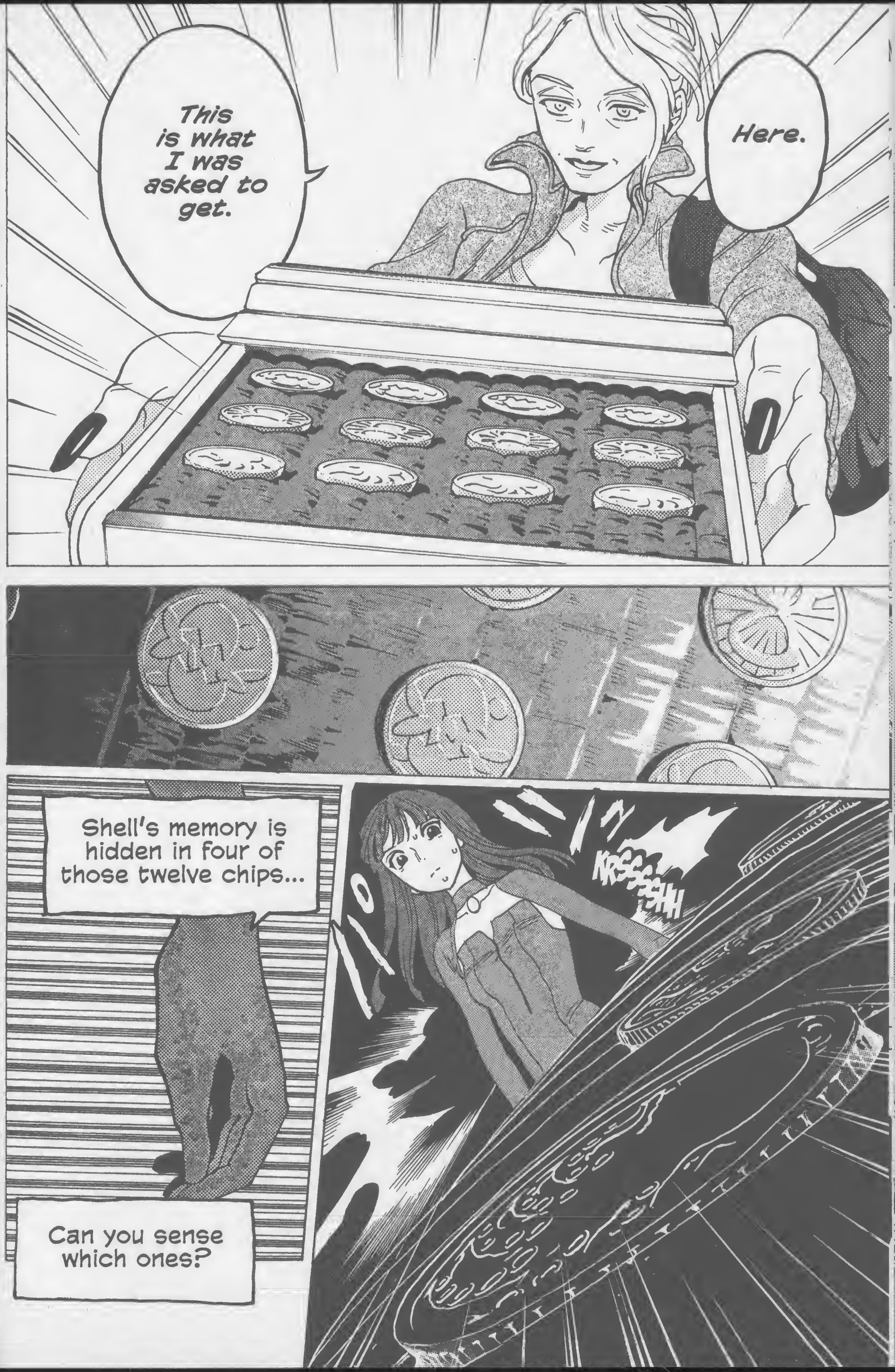

VRRR
Man-ager? What's that?
I don't work there anymore ...
A $1 million chip ?!
You want to know where it is?

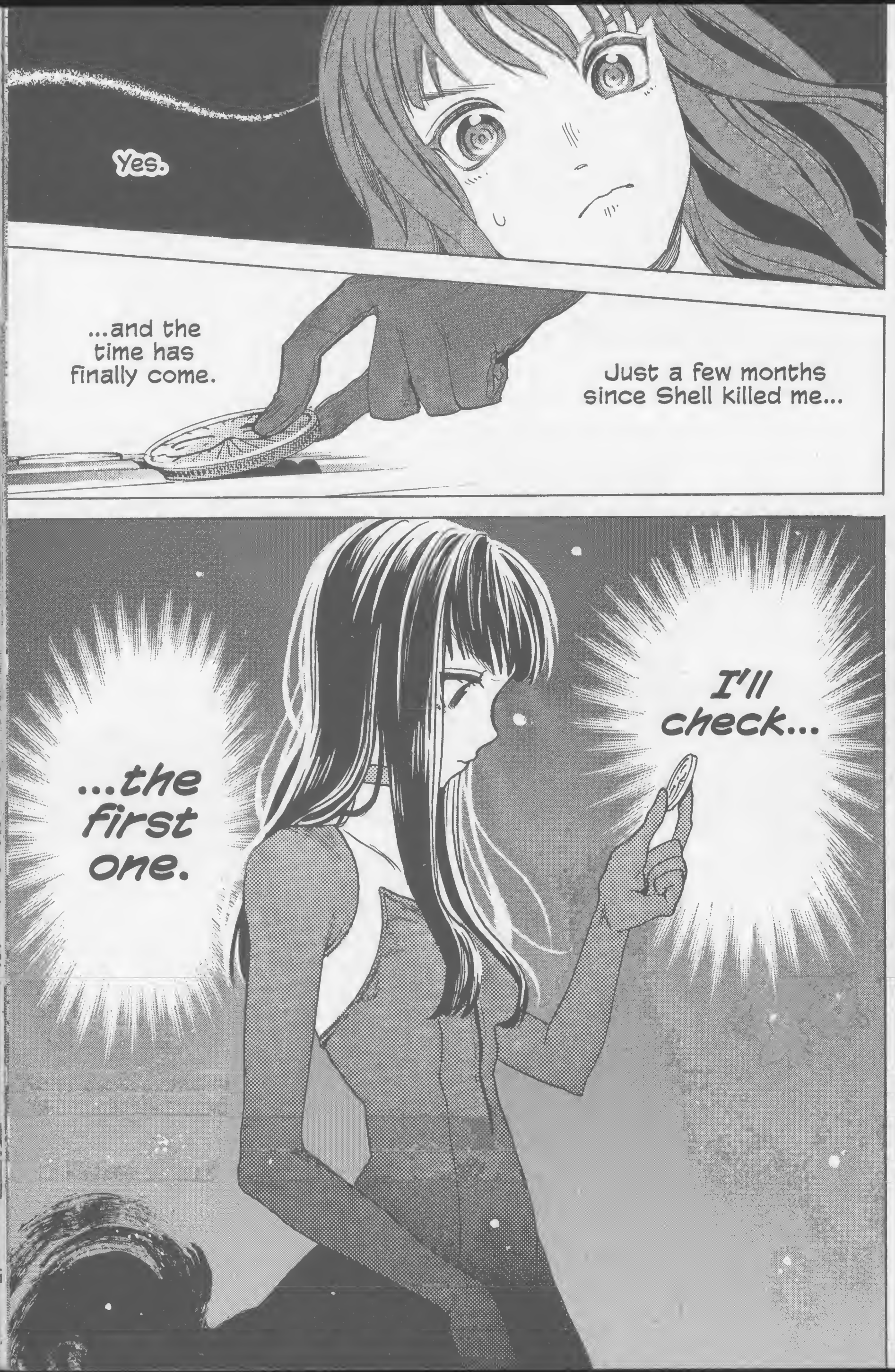

I'm not sure why I'm showing you.
Have the owner tell you.
He can't come today.
Why don't you know where it is?
It hasn't been used in over 20 years...
It's in the 8th safe... with a 56 number passcode.
BEEP BEEP
Memorize it.
N-No way!
ガコン
CREAK

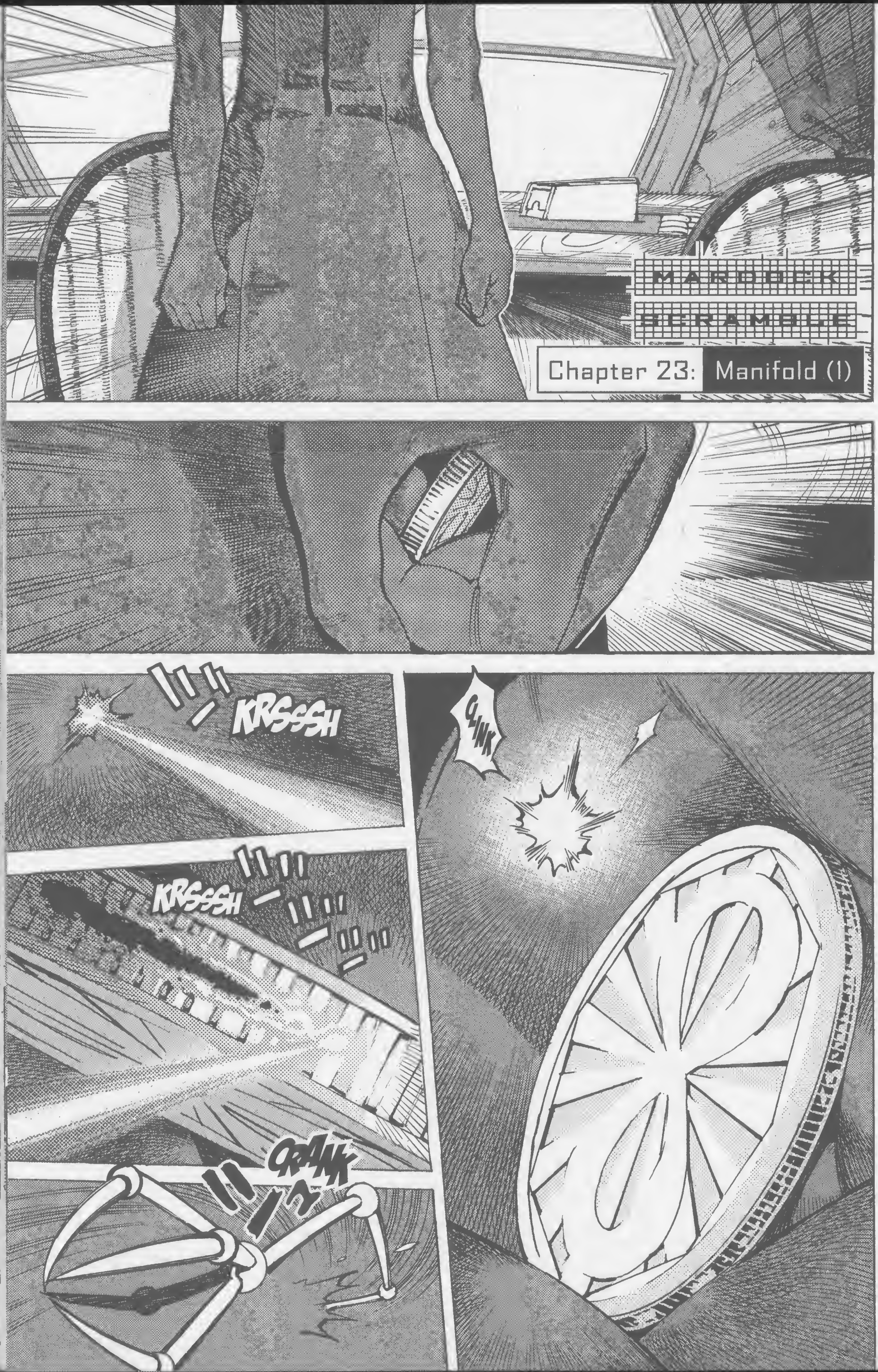

This is it.
Why is it in such a weird place?
No idea.
I'll be going now.
W-
Wait, Belle!
THUD
Ashley wants you to carry it.
...?


Ah...
...!!
Hey!
This is for you?!
Oh!

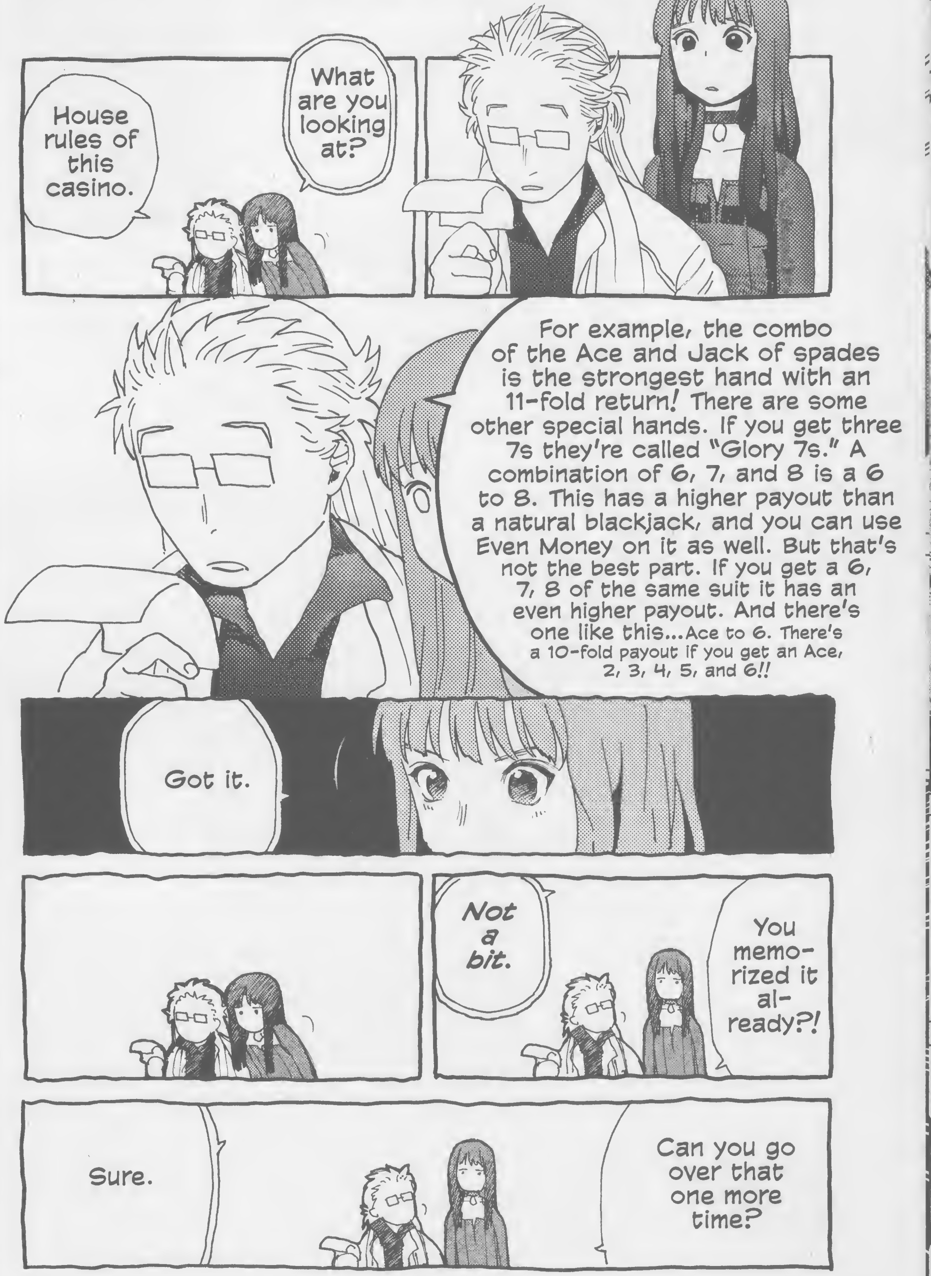

I–
I'm so happy I got to see you again!!
I only came here because I was asked to.
Is this chip necessary for...
...you to achieve your goal?
You must be planning something big!
I won't give up.
...


Here.
This is what I was asked to get.
Shell's memory is hidden in four of those twelve chips...
Can you sense which ones?
KRSSSHH

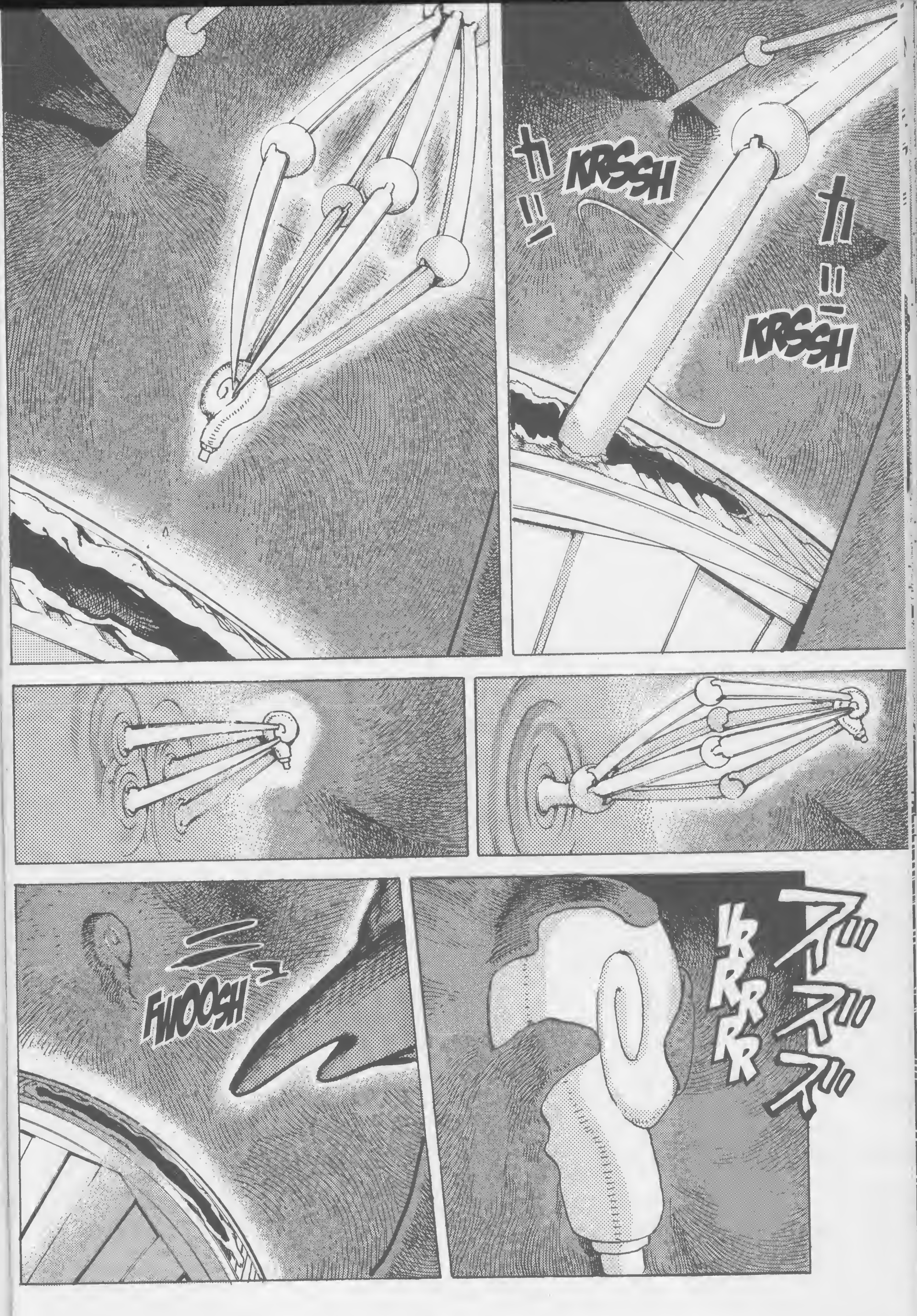

Yes.
Just a few months since Shell killed me...
...and the time has finally come.
I'll check...
...the first one.

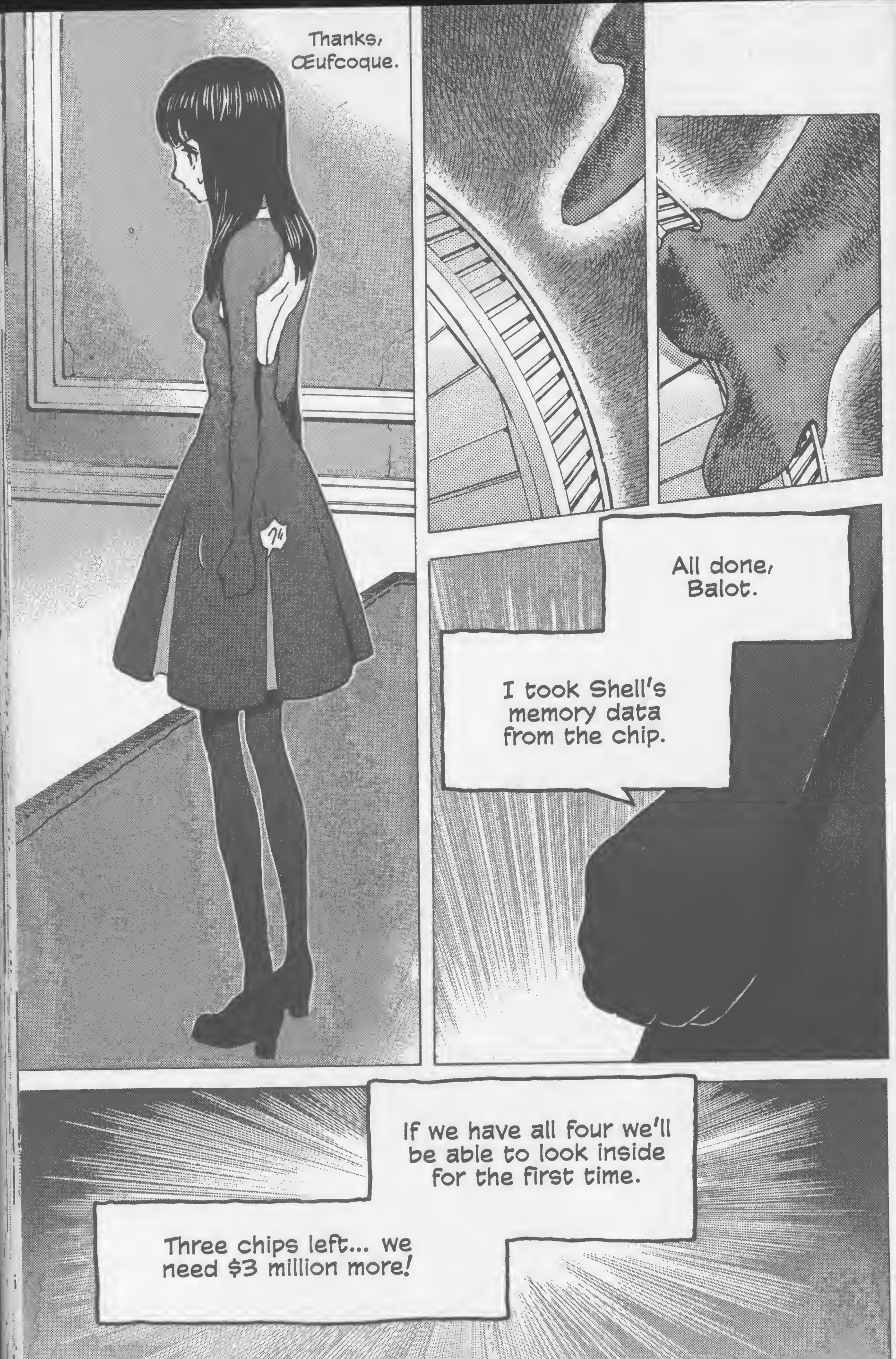

MARDOCK SCRAMBLE
Chapter 23: Manifold (1)
KRSSSH
CLINK
KRSSSH
CRANK

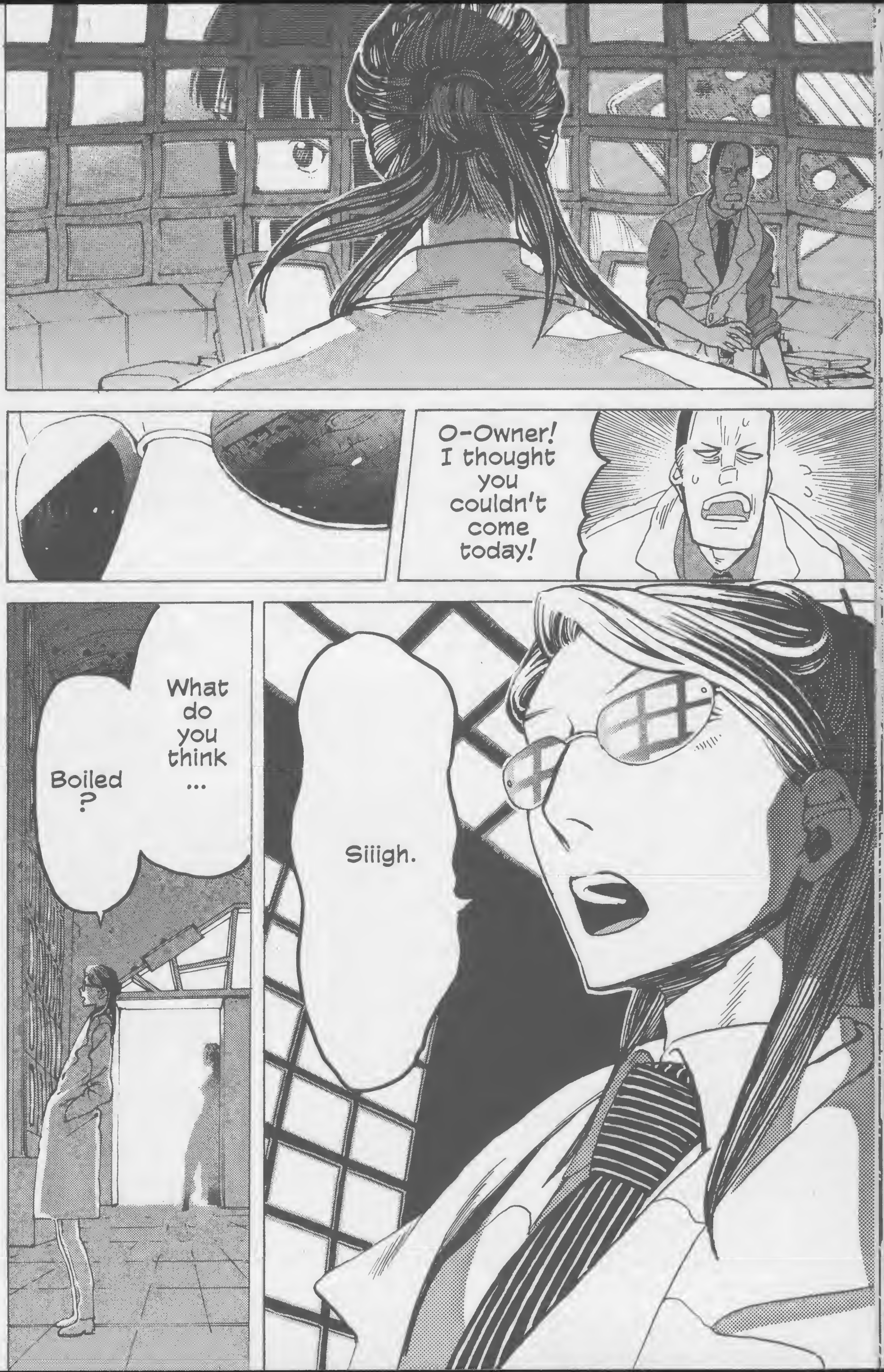
Dr. Easter's Casino Lecture

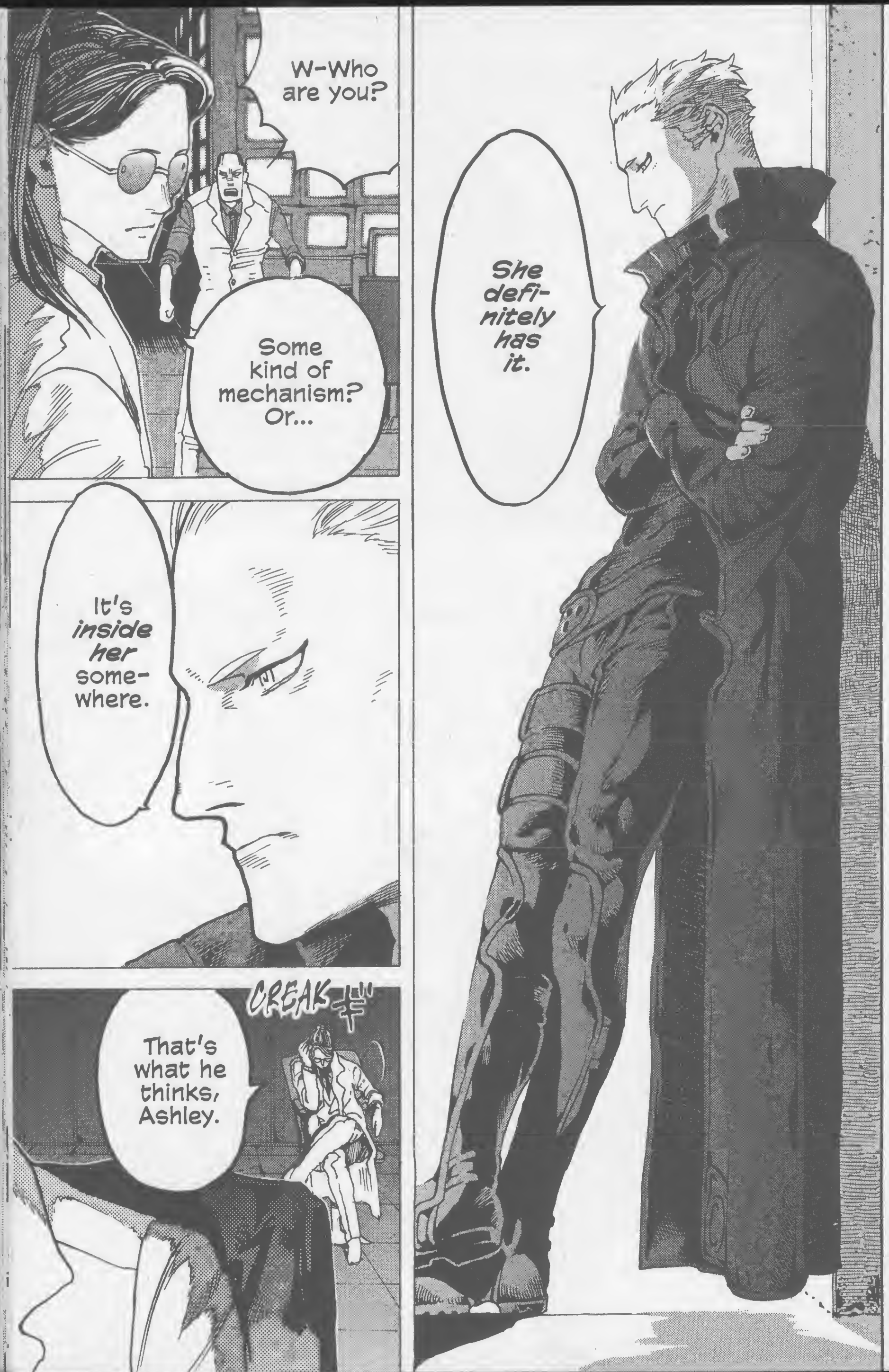

What are you looking at?
House rules of this casino.
For example, the combo of the Ace and Jack of spades is the strongest hand with an 11-fold return! There are some other special hands. If you get three 7s they're called "Glory 7s." A combination of 6, 7, and 8 is a 6 to 8. This has a higher payout than a natural blackjack, and you can use Even Money on it as well. But that's not the best part. If you get a 6, 7, 8 of the same suit it has an even higher payout. And there's one like this...Ace to 6. There's a 10-fold payout if you get an Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6!!
Got it.
You memorized it already?!
Not a bit.
Can you go over that one more time?
Sure.

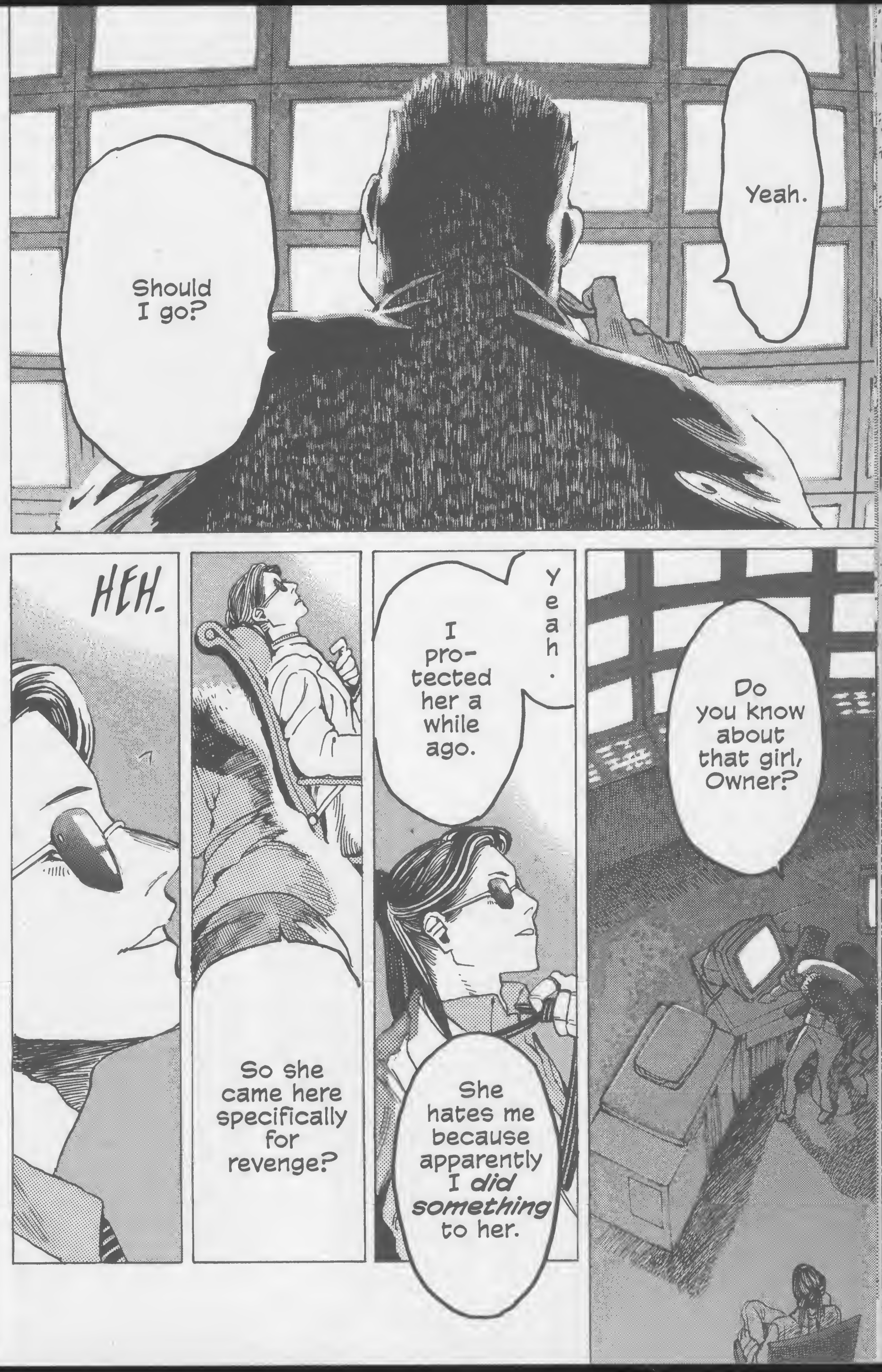
-End-

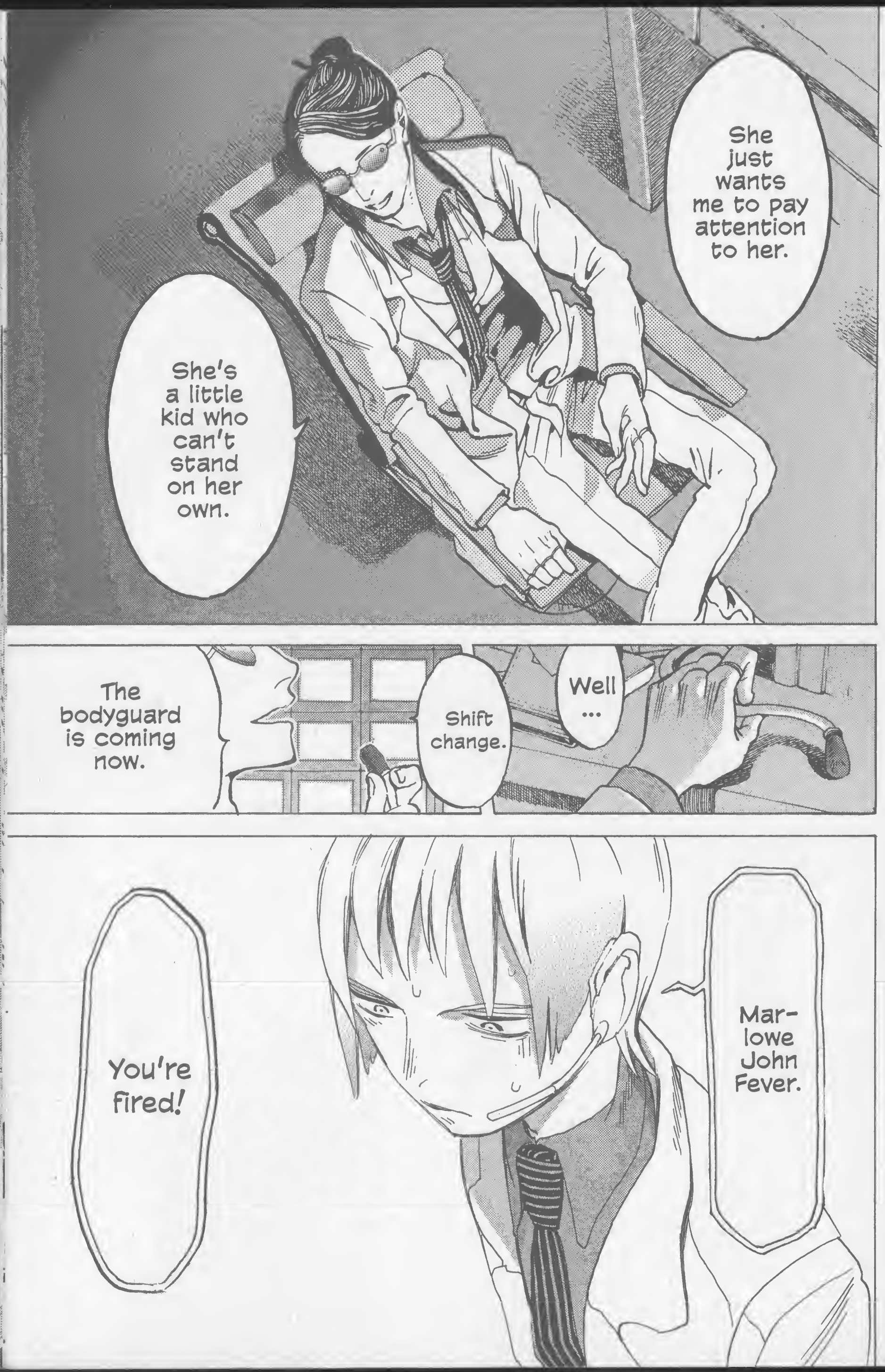

KRSSH
KRSSH
FWOOSH
KRRRR

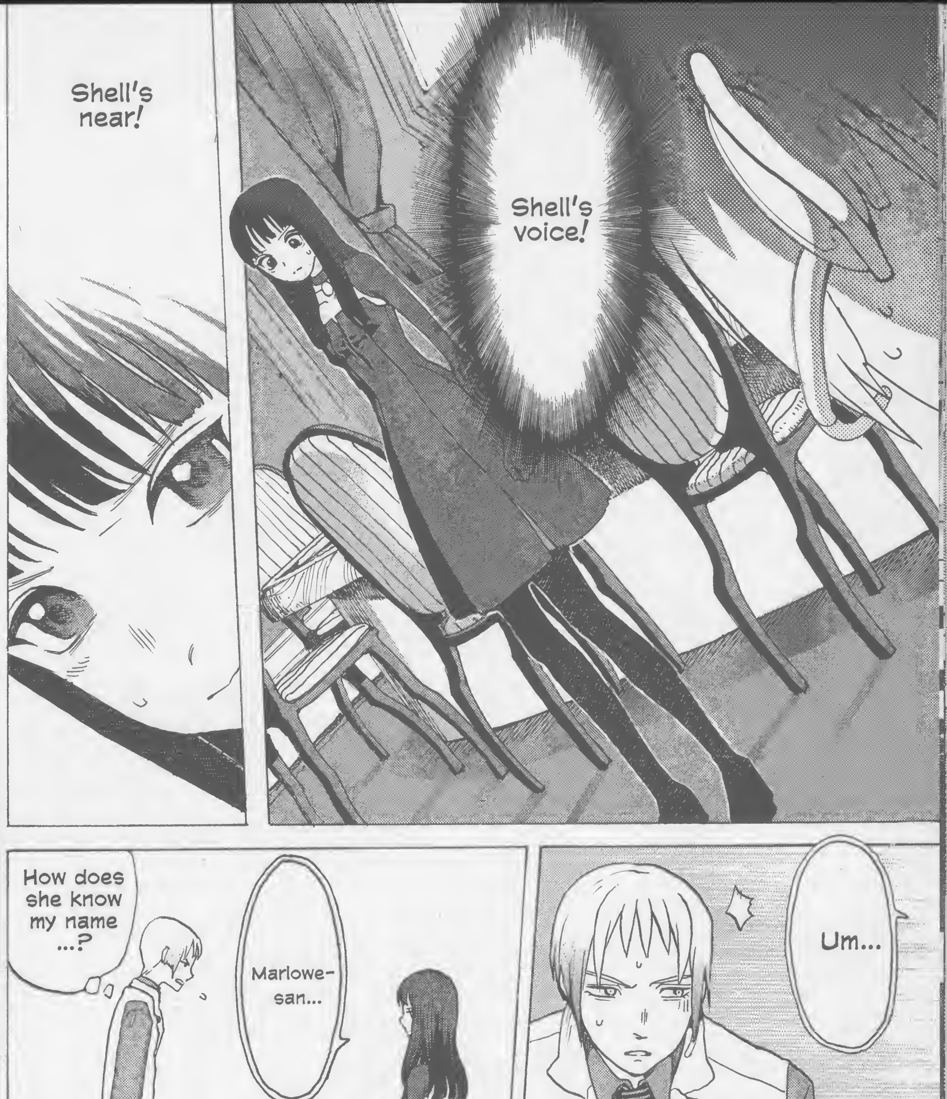

All done, Balot.
I took Shell's memory data from the chip.
Thanks, Œufcoque.
If we have all four we'll be able to look inside for the first time.
Three chips left... we need $3 million more!

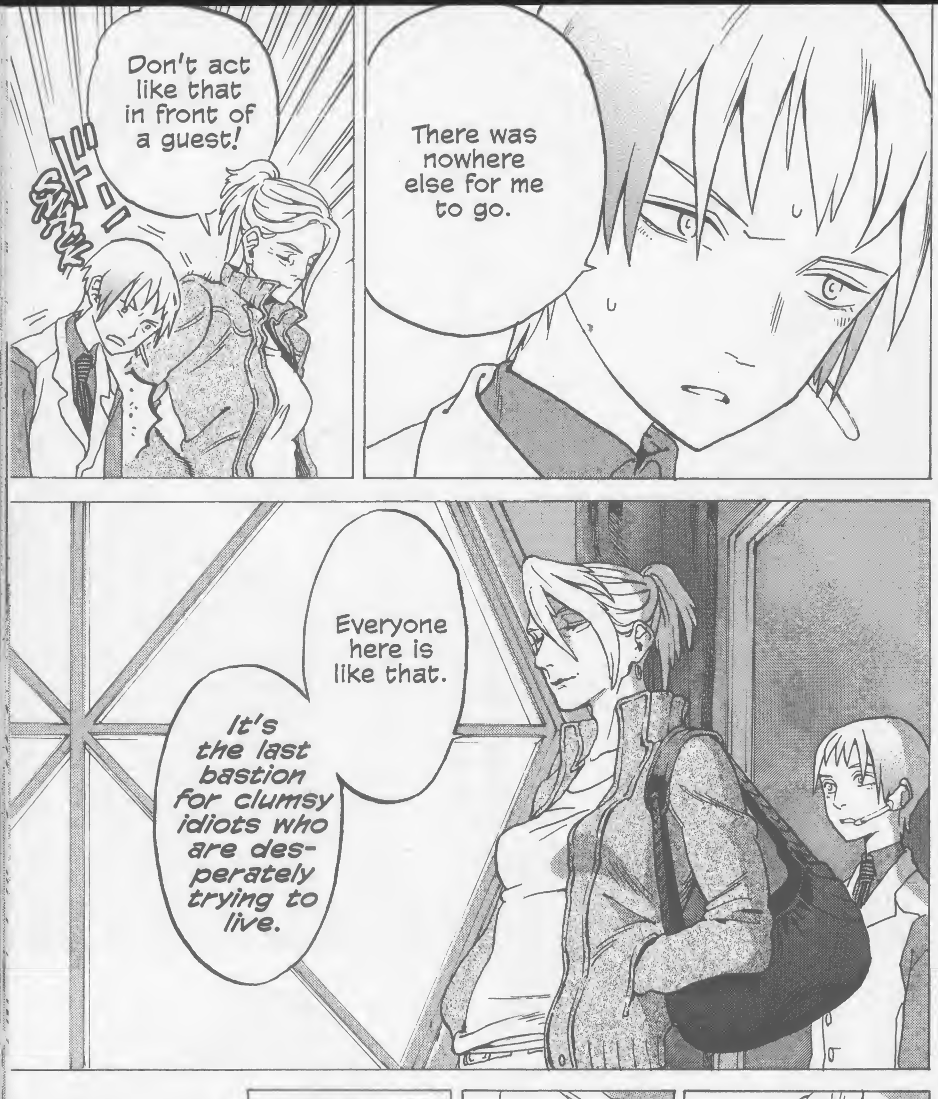

O-Owner! I thought you couldn't come today!
Siiigh.
What do you think...
Boiled?

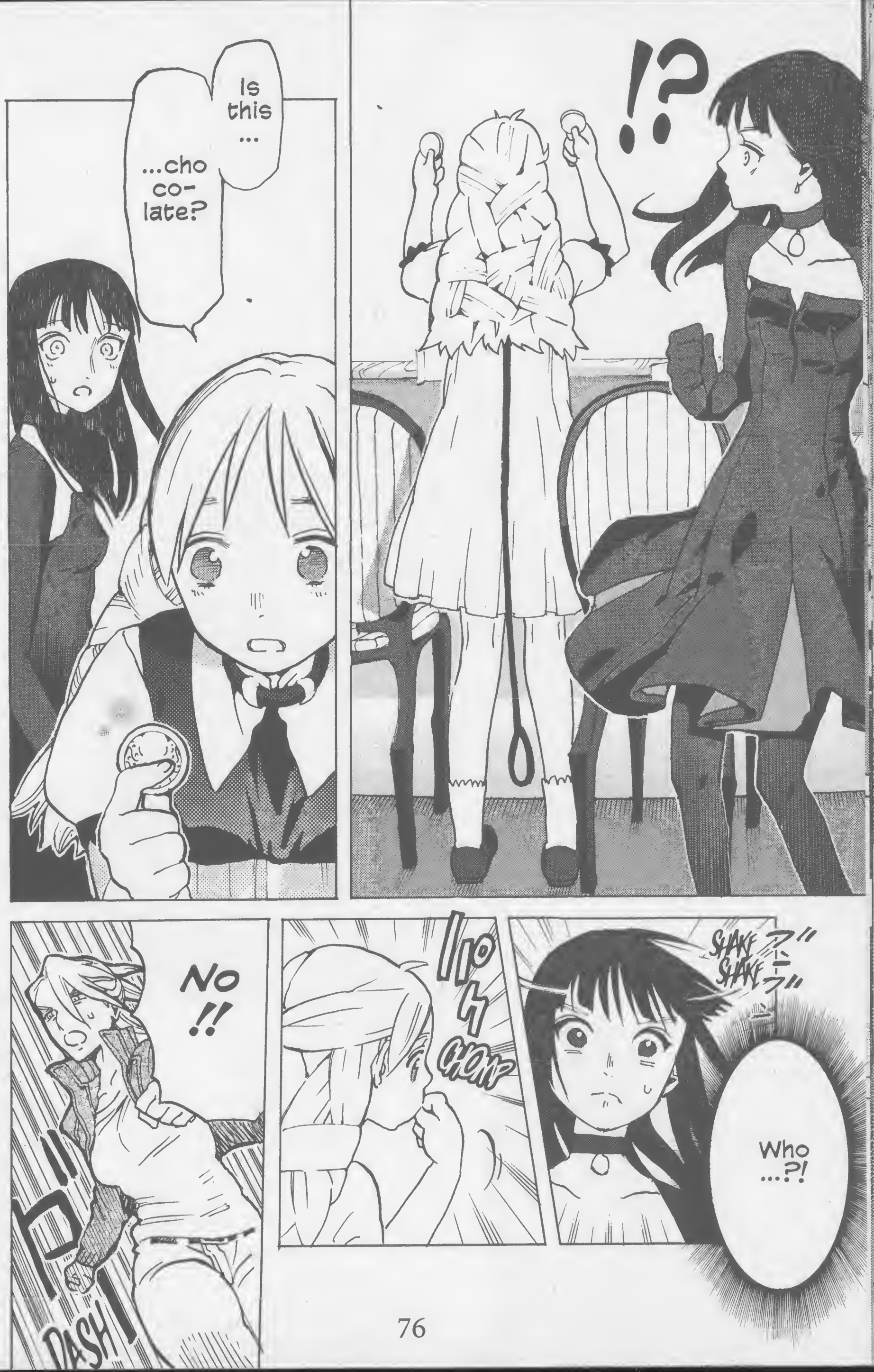

W-Who are you?
She definitely has it.
Some kind of mechanism? Or...
It's inside her somewhere.
CREAK
That's what he thinks, Ashley.

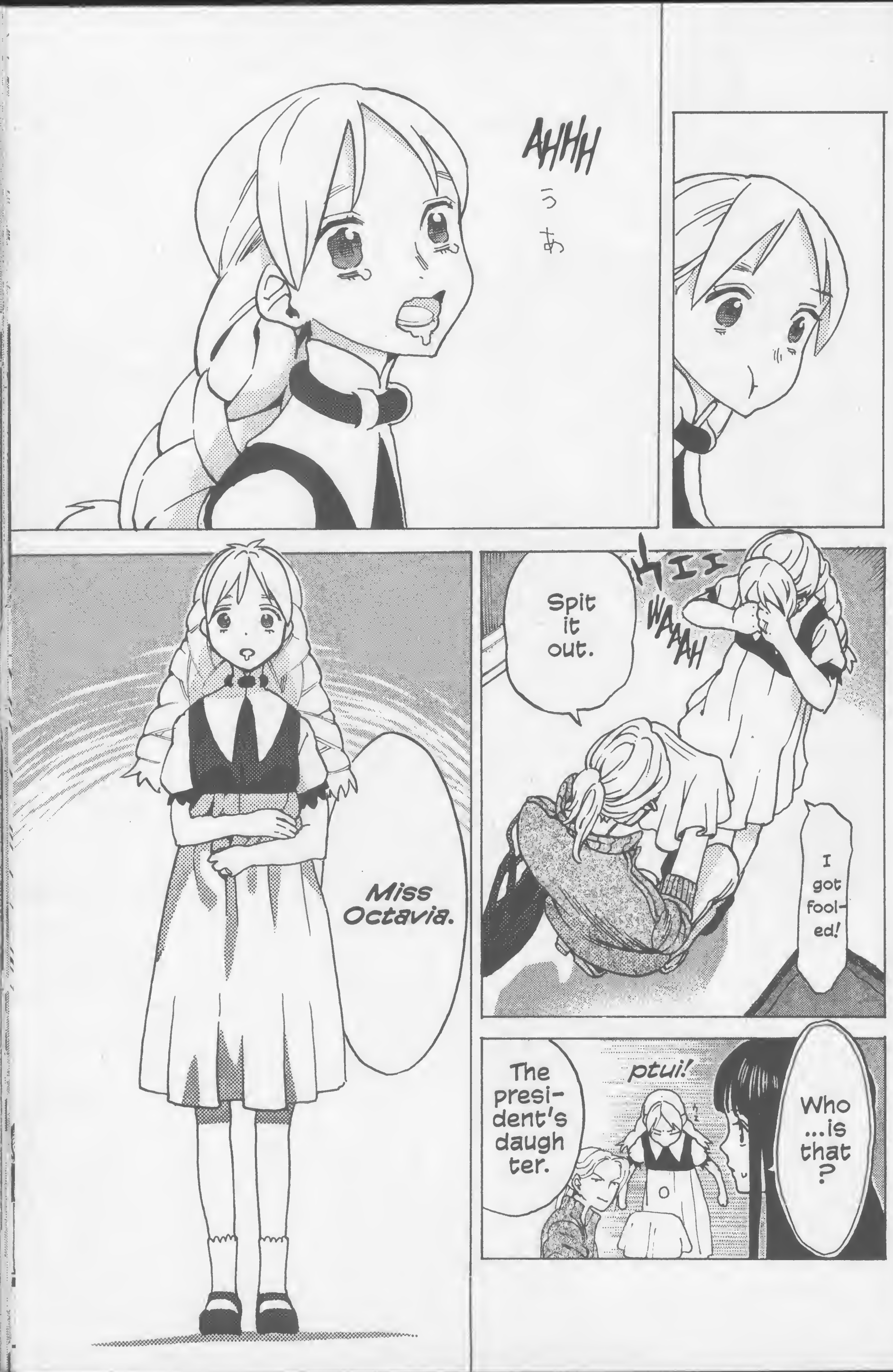

Yeah.
Should I go?
Do you know about that girl, Owner?
Yeah.
I protected her a while ago.
She hates me because apparently I *did something* to her.
So she came here specifically for revenge?
HEH.

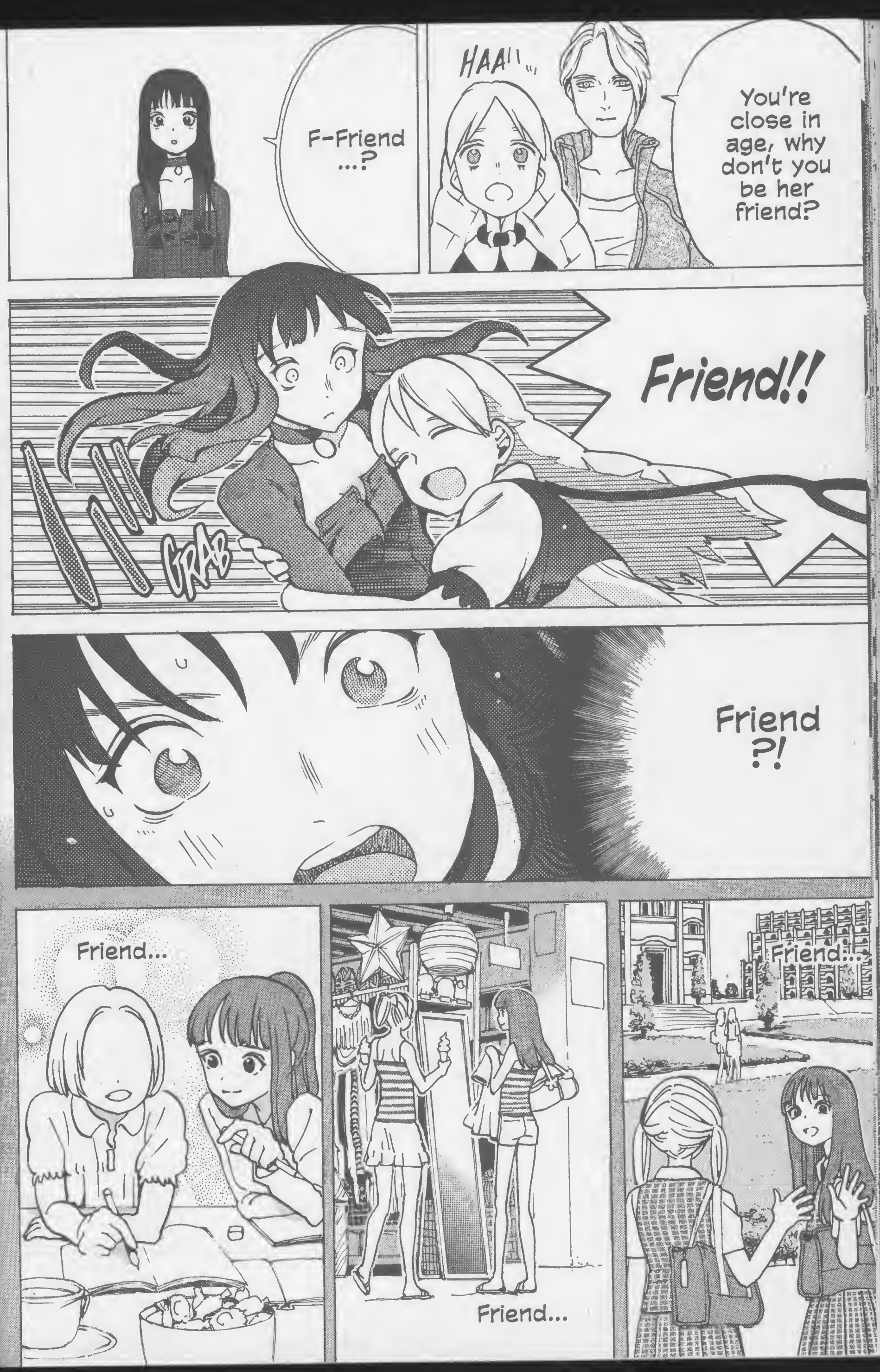

She just wants me to pay attention to her.
She's a little kid who can't stand on her own.
Well ...
Shift change.
The bodyguard is coming now.
Marlowe John Fever.
You're fired!

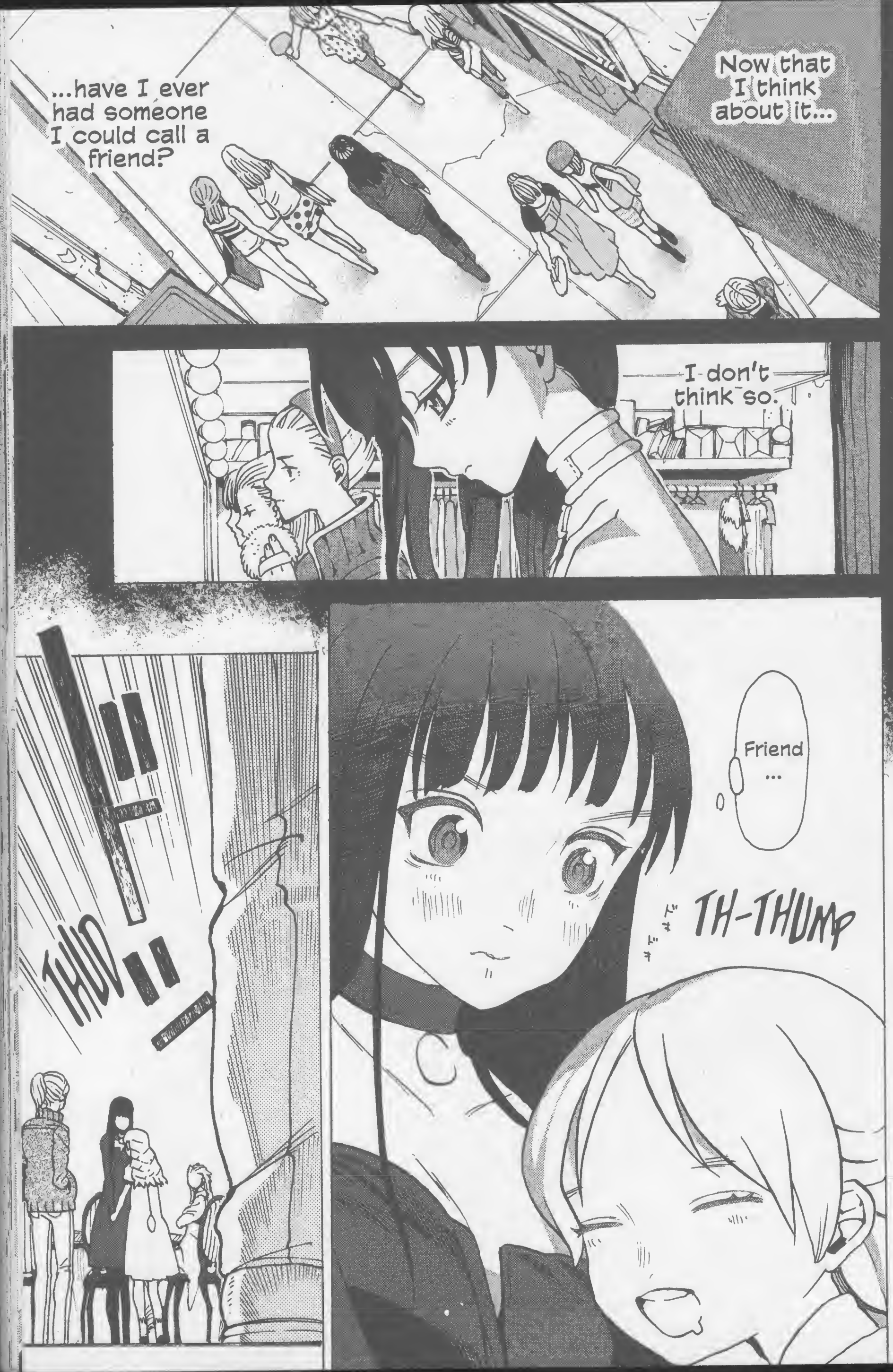

Shell's voice!
Shell's near!
Um...
Marlowe-san...
How does she know my name ...?
Why did you want to work here?

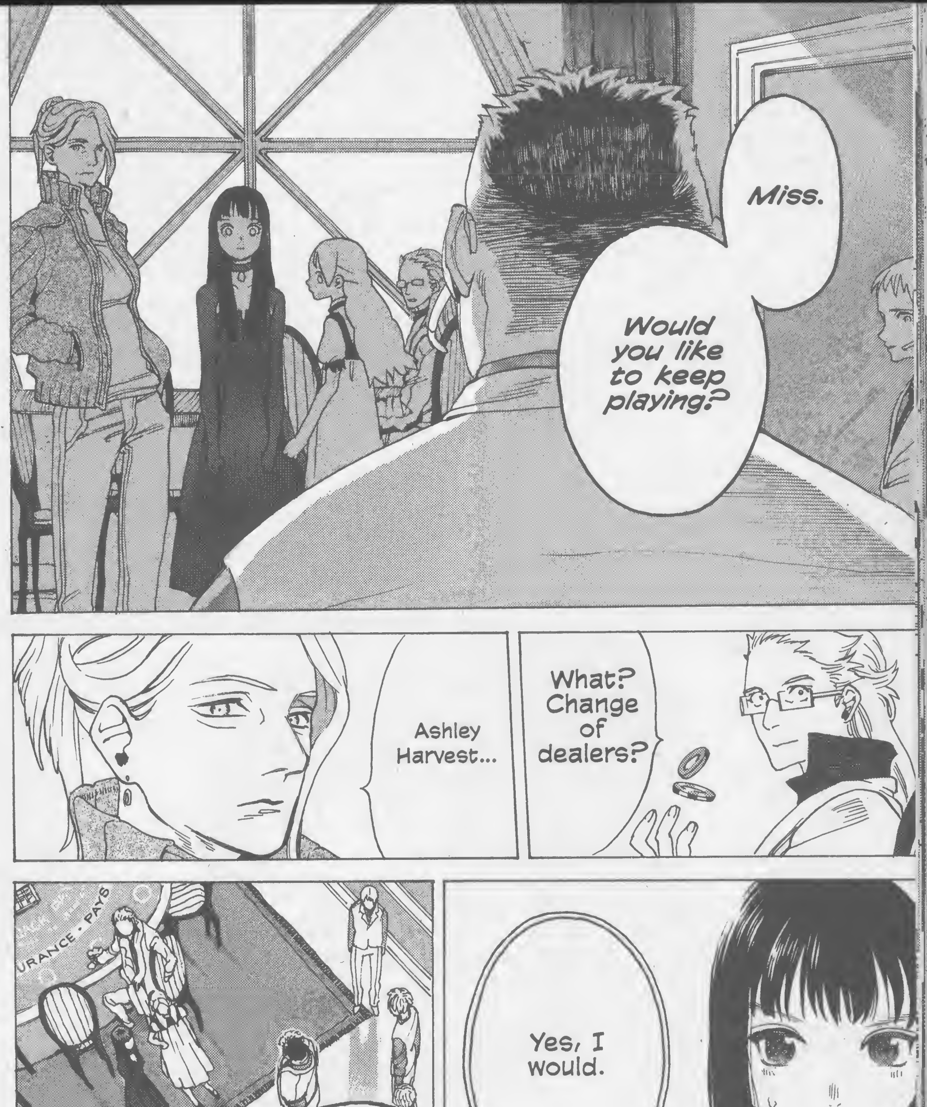

There was nowhere else for me to go.
Don't act like that in front of a guest!
SMACK
Everyone here is like that.
It's the last bastion for clumsy idiots who are desperately trying to live.
Belle-san...
...
Hey, hey!

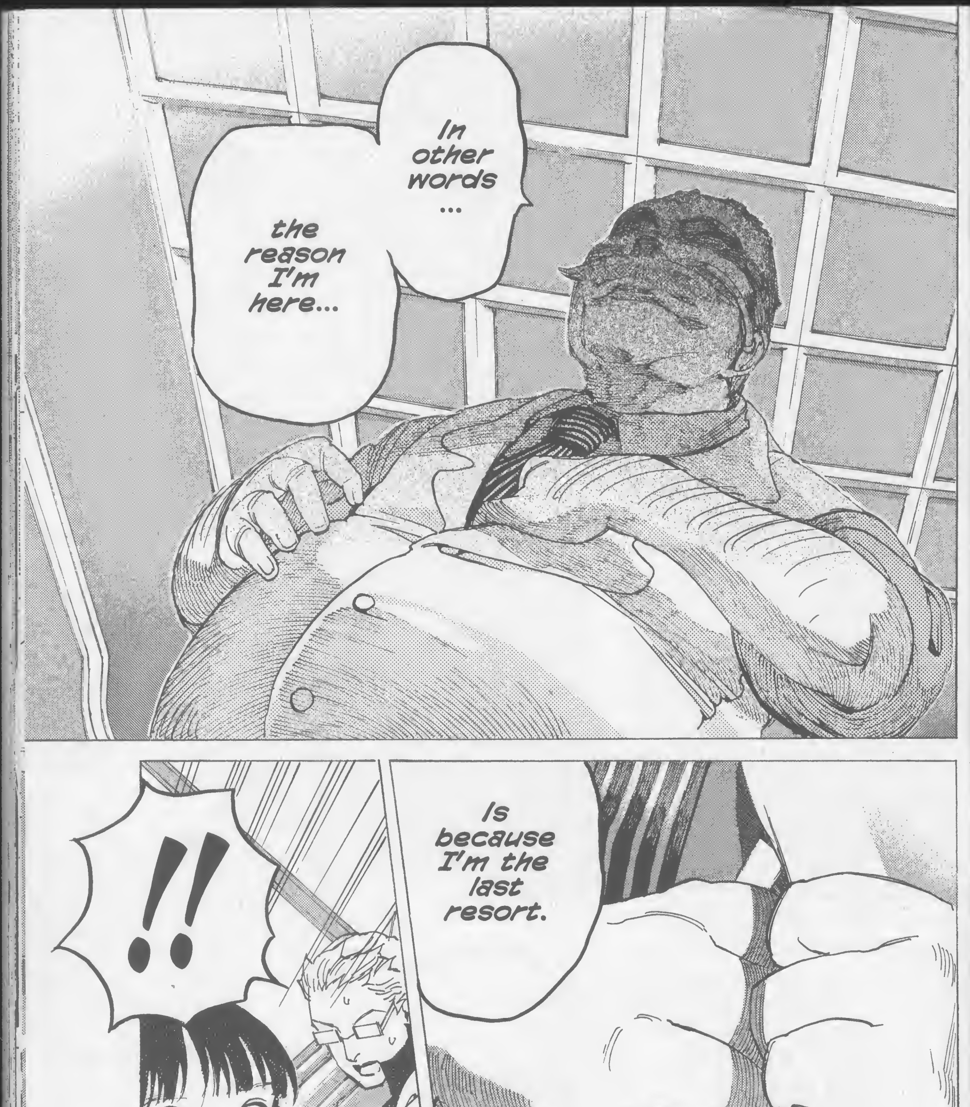

!?
Is this ...
...cho co-late?
SHAKE SHAKE
Who ...?!
CHOMP
No !!
DASH

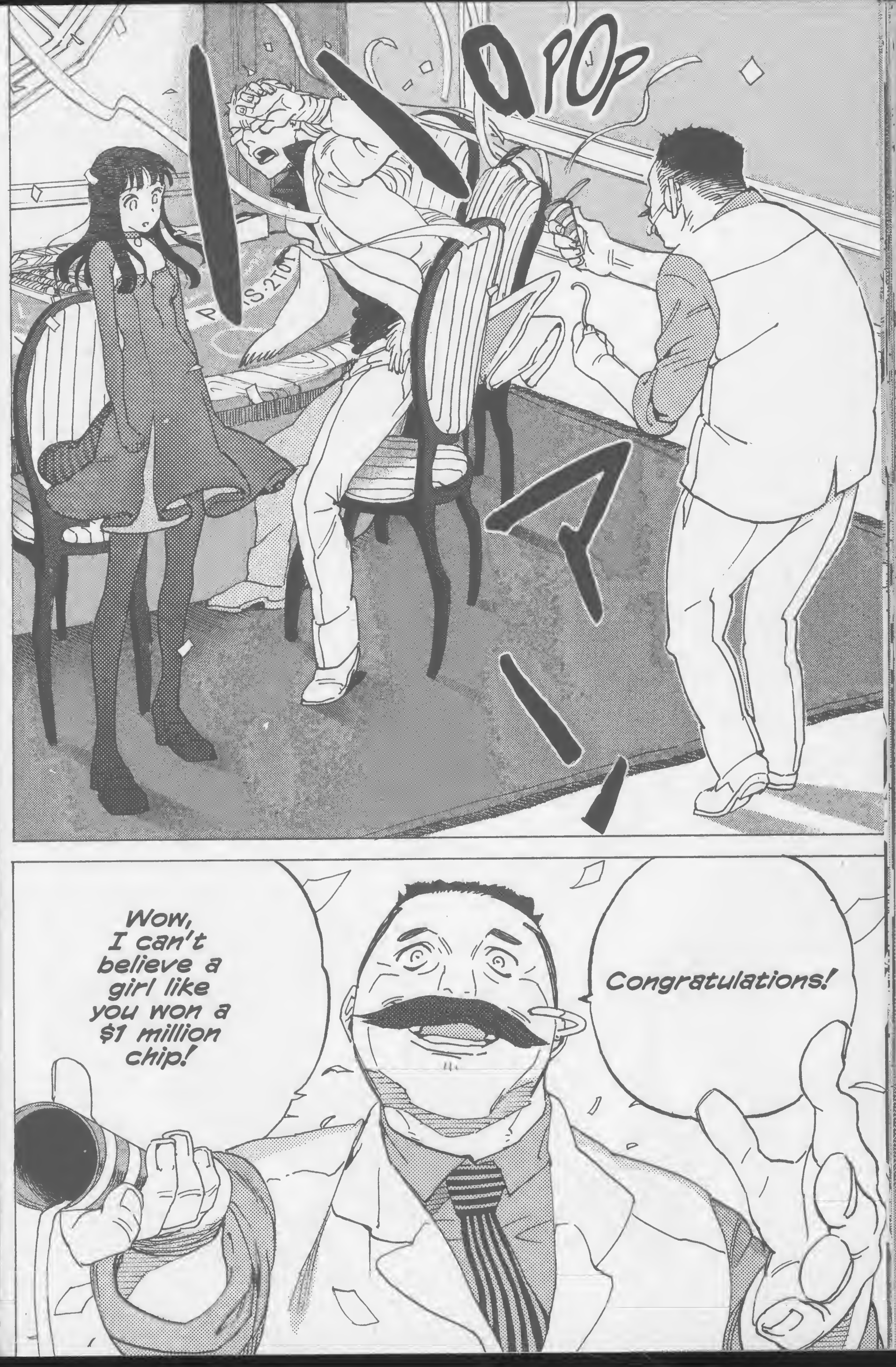

AHHH
うあ
WAAAH
Spit it out.
I got fooled!
Who ...is that?
ptui!
The president's daughter.
Miss Octavia.

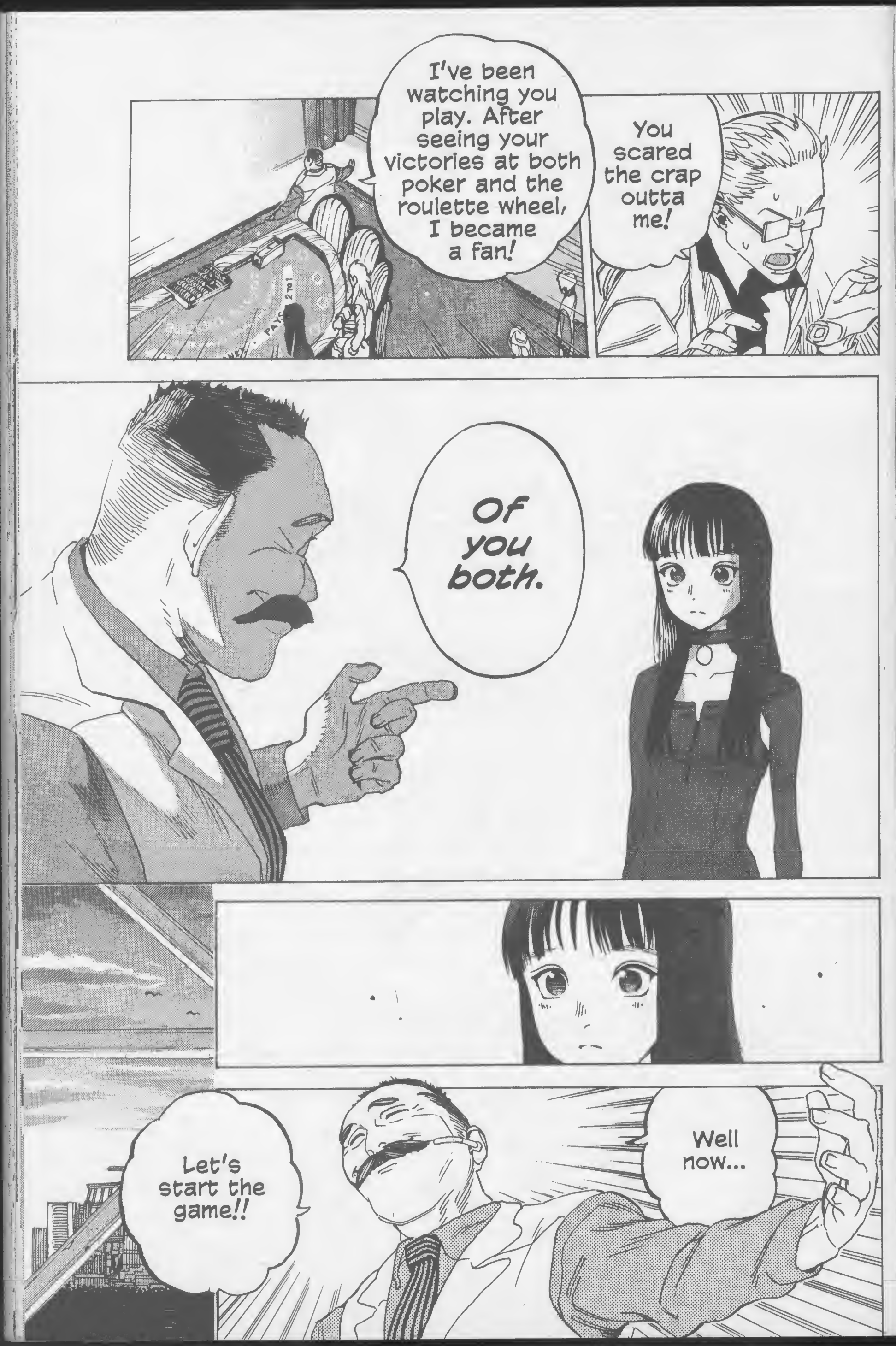

You're close in age, why don't you be her friend?
HAA!!
F-Friend ...?
Friend!!
GRAB
Friend ?!
Friend...
Friend...
Friend...

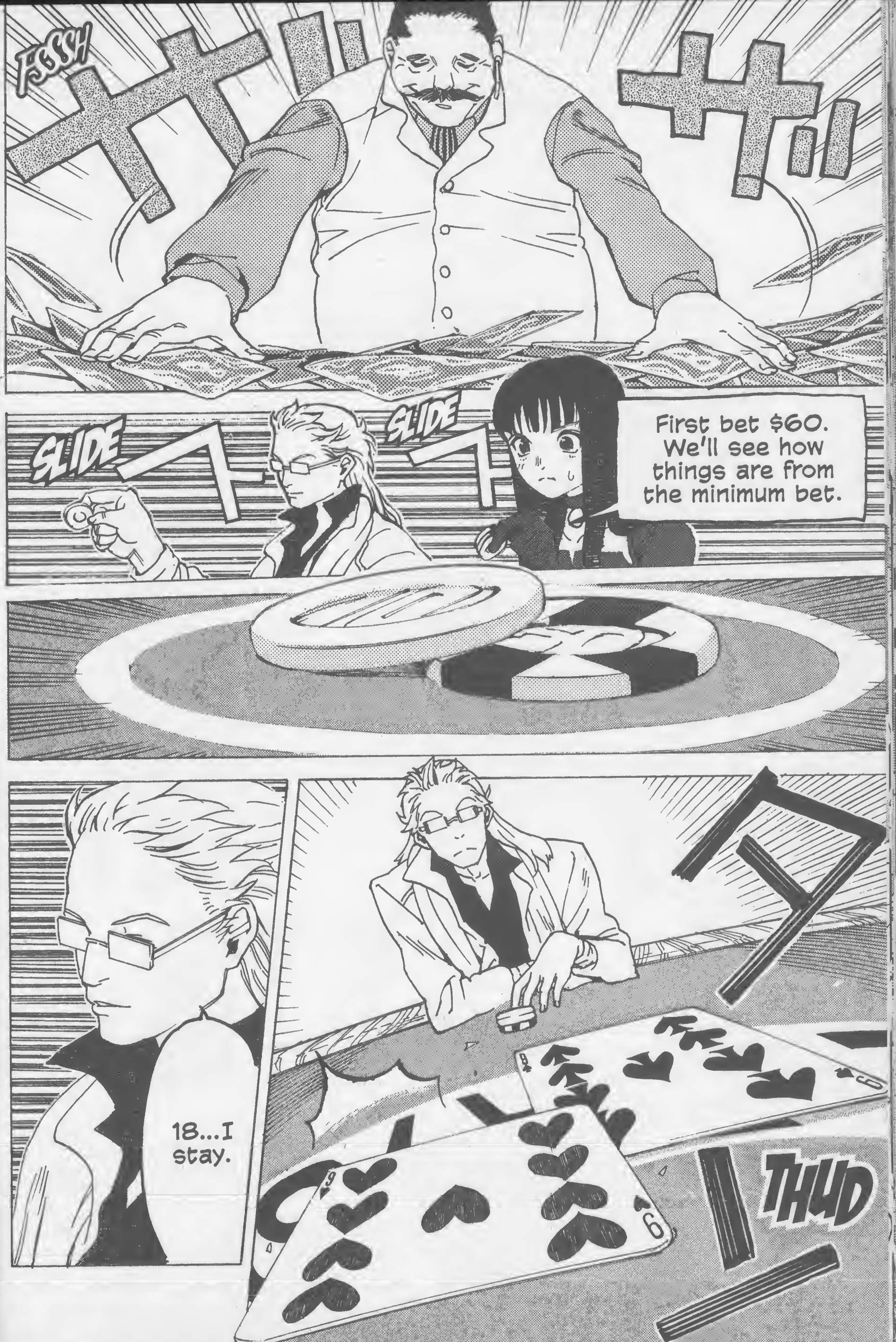

Now that I think about it...
...have I ever had someone I could call a friend?
I don't think so.
Friend ...
TH-THUMP
THUD

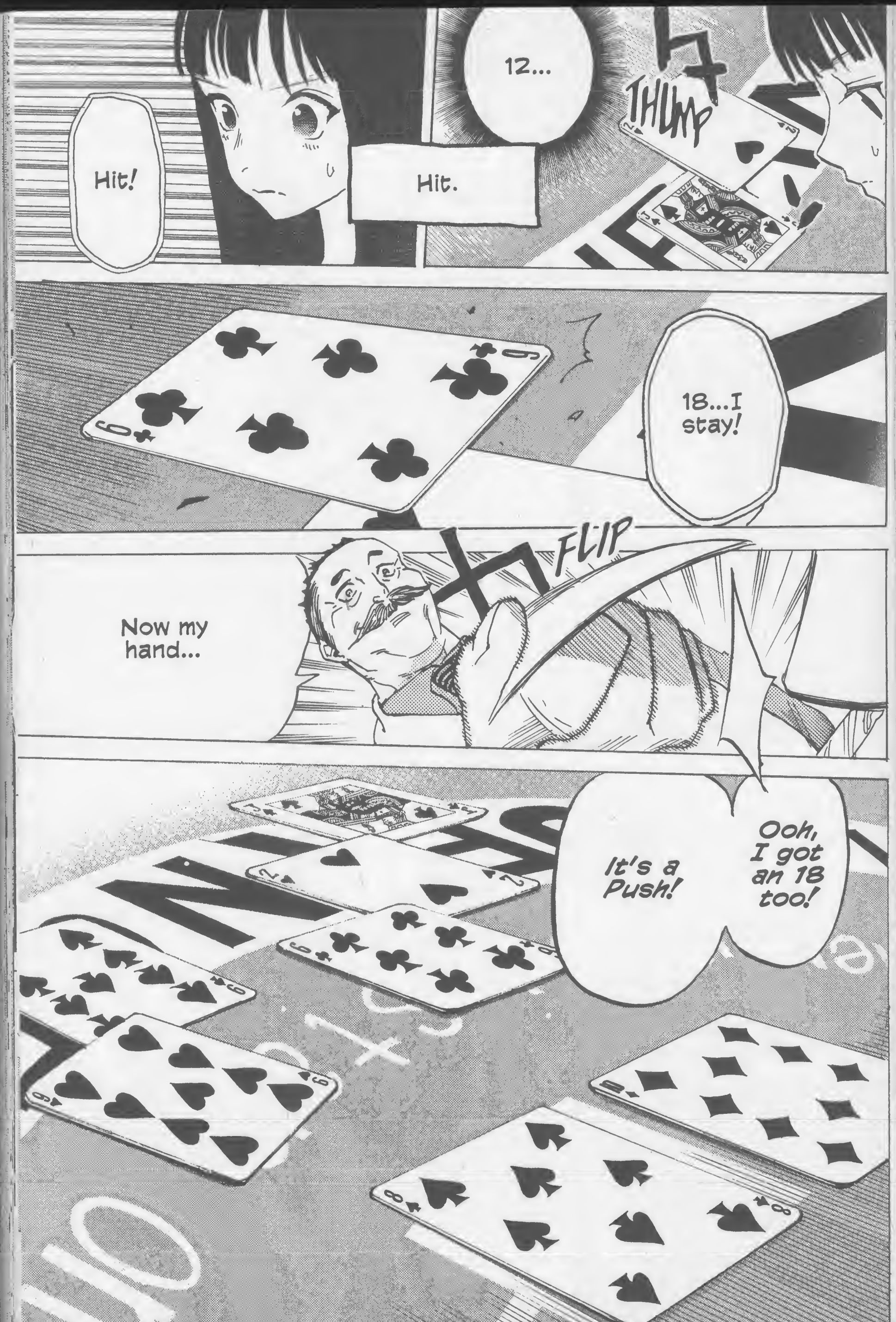

Miss.
Would you like to keep playing?
What? Change of dealers?
Ashley Harvest...
Yes, I would.
Good. The boss asked me to deal...
...and win back all the money you got.

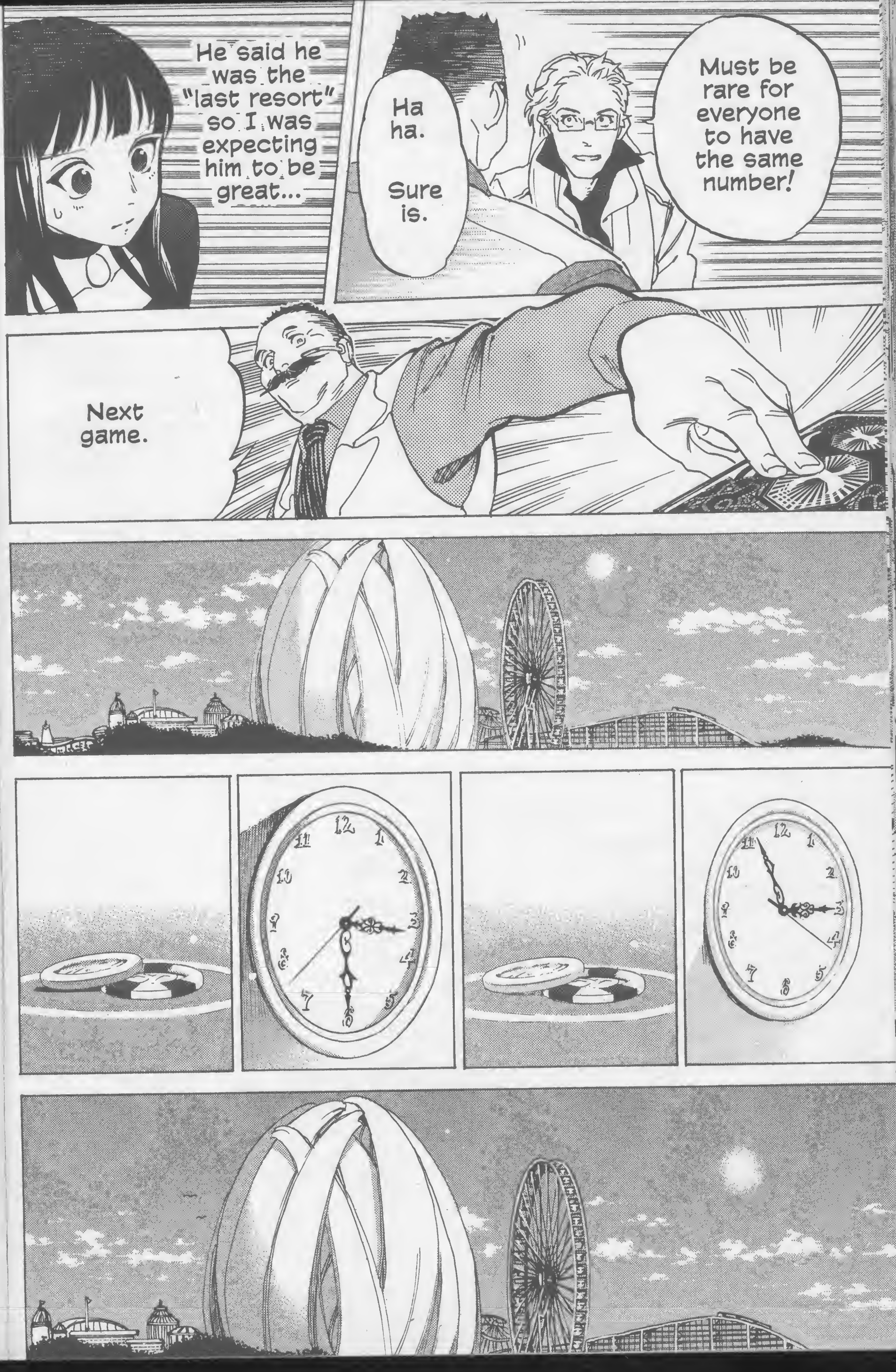

In other words...
the reason I'm here...
Is because I'm the last resort.
GRAB
!!

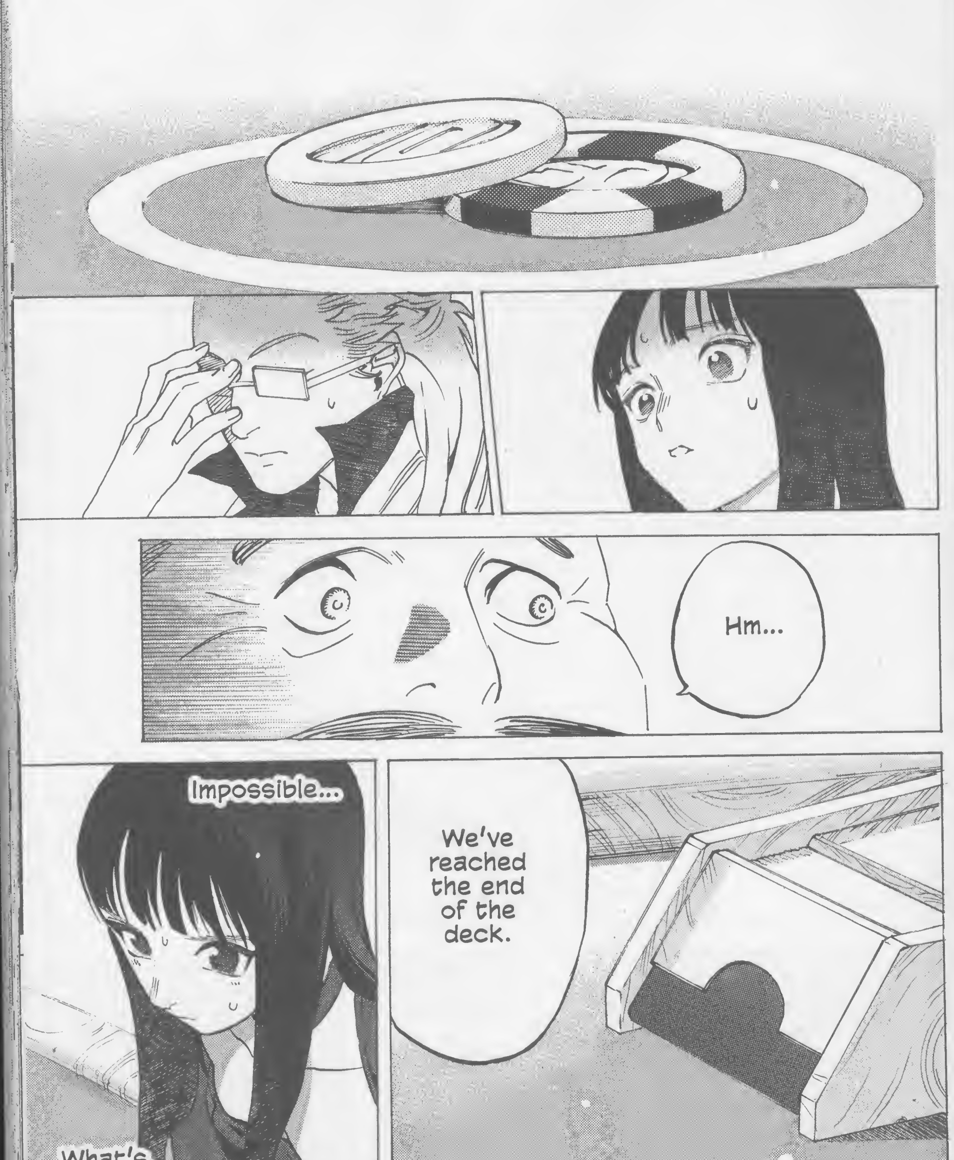

POP
Congratulations!
Wow, I can't believe a girl like you won a $1 million chip!

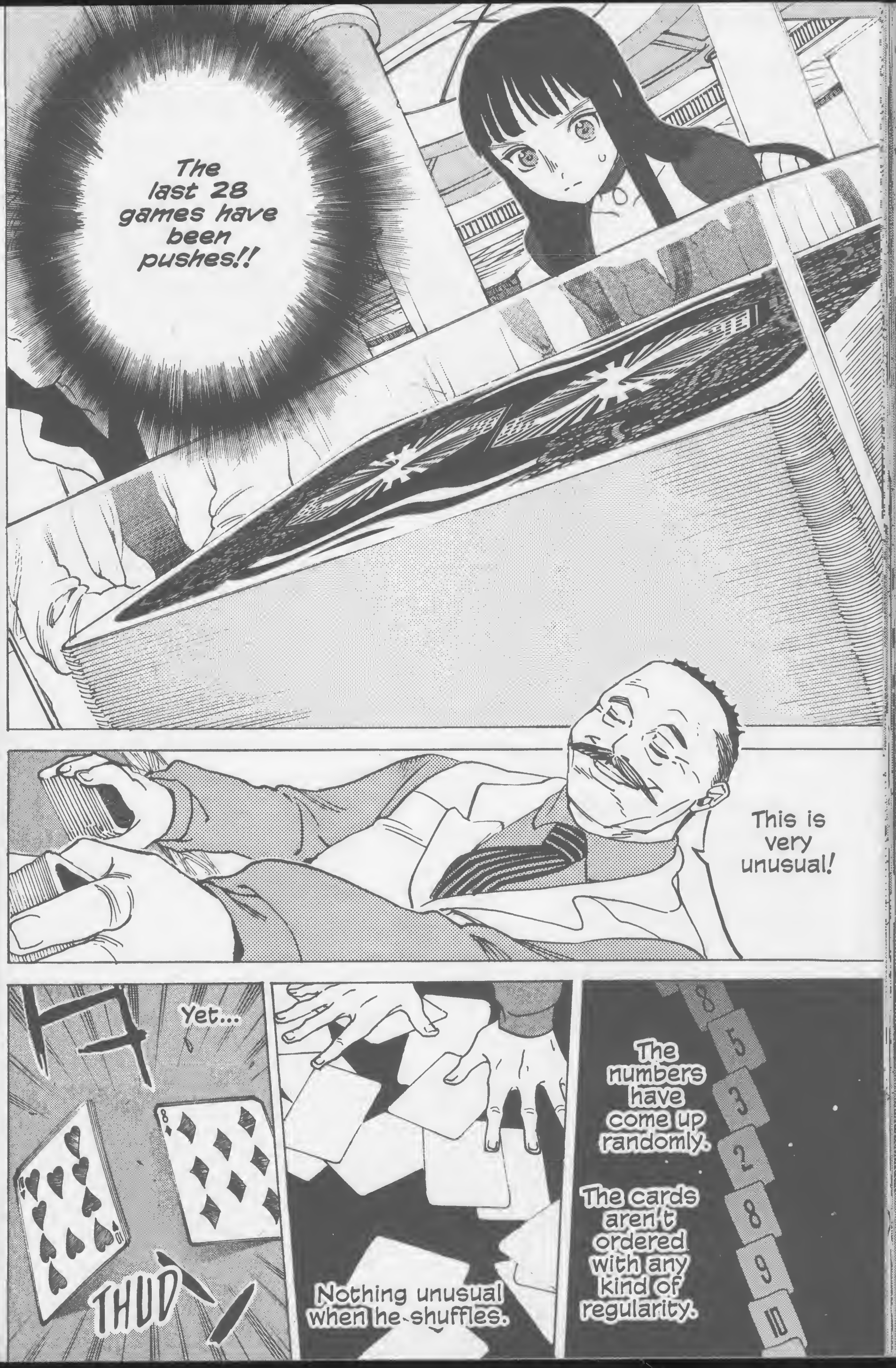

You scared the crap outta me!
I've been watching you play. After seeing your victories at both poker and the roulette wheel, I became a fan!
Of you both.
. . .
Well now...
Let's start the game!!

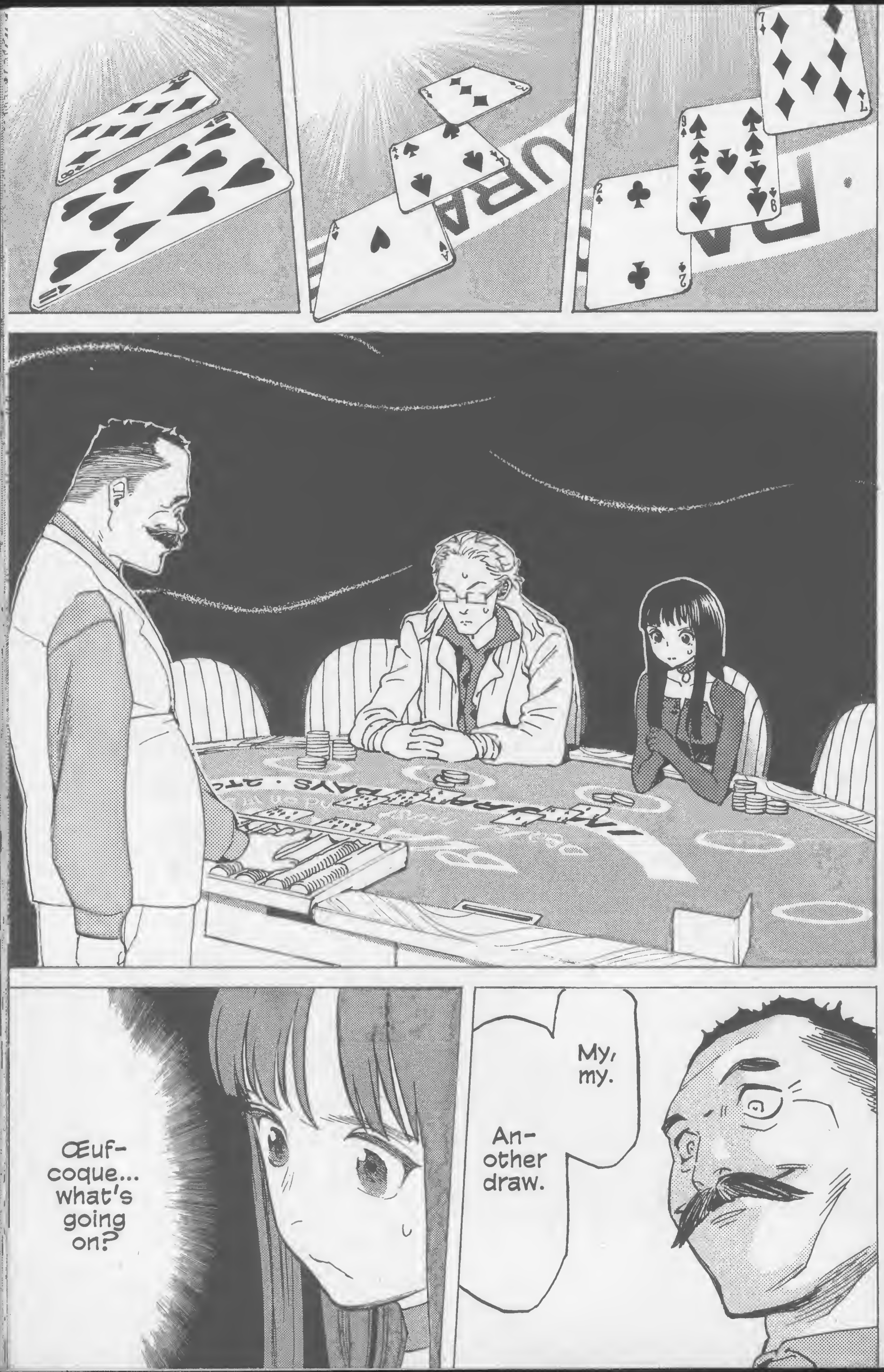

FOSSH
SLIDE
SLIDE
First bet $60. We'll see how things are from the minimum bet.
18...I stay.
THUD

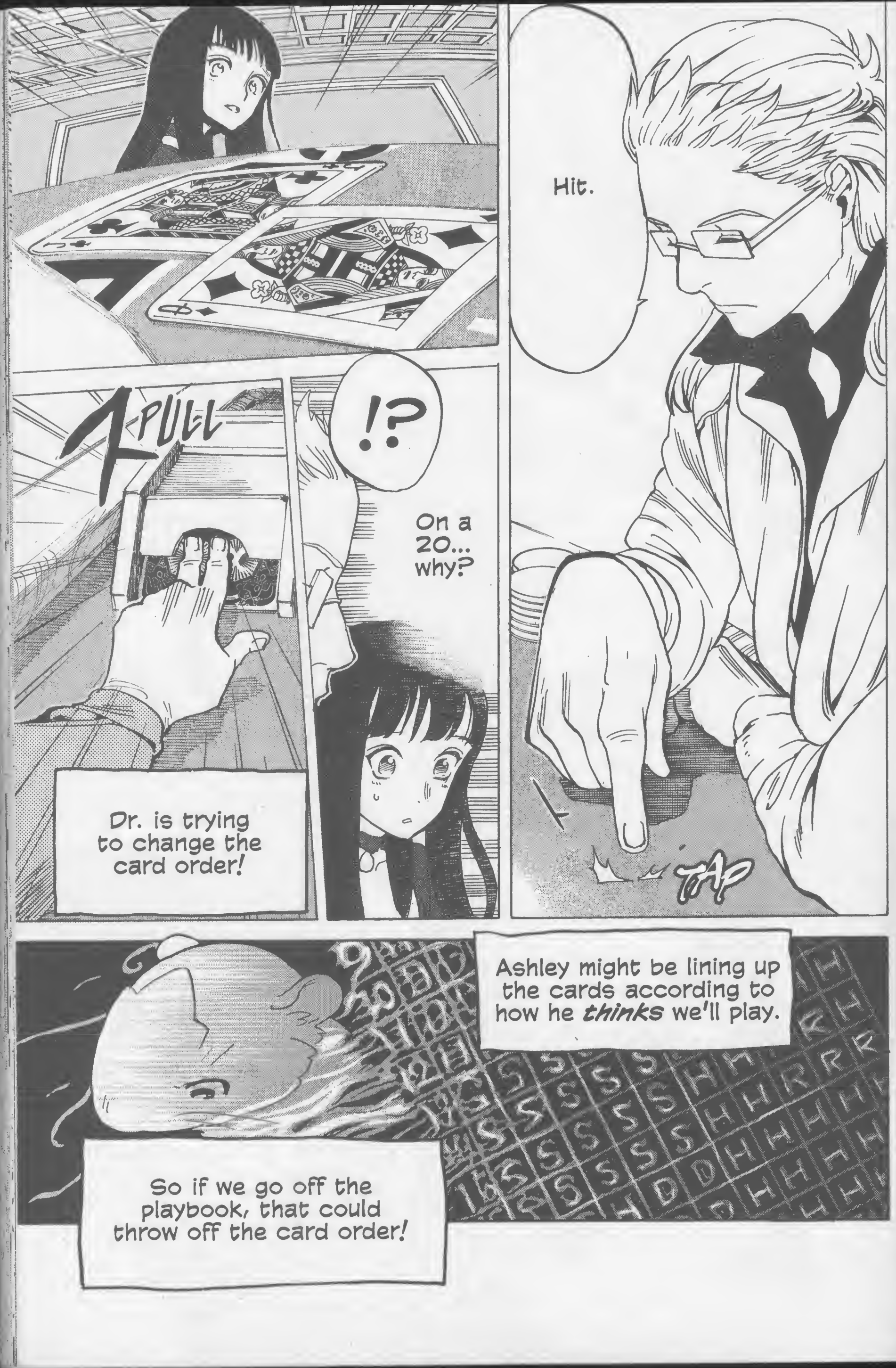

12...
THUMP
Hit.
Hit!
18...I stay!
FLIP
Now my hand...
Ooh, I got an 18 too!
It's a Push!

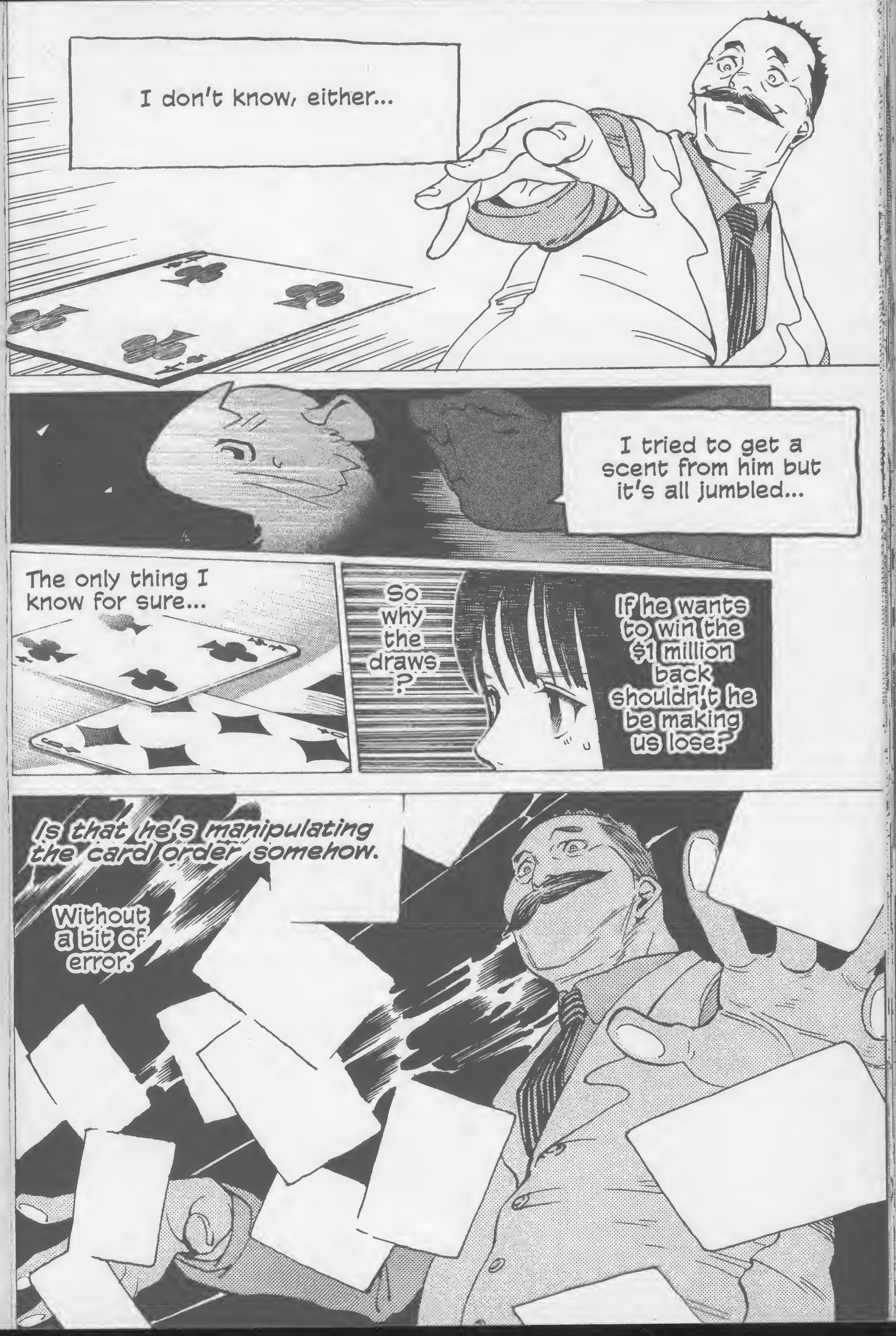

Must be rare for everyone to have the same number!
Ha ha. Sure is.
He said he was the "last resort" so I was expecting him to be great...
Next game.

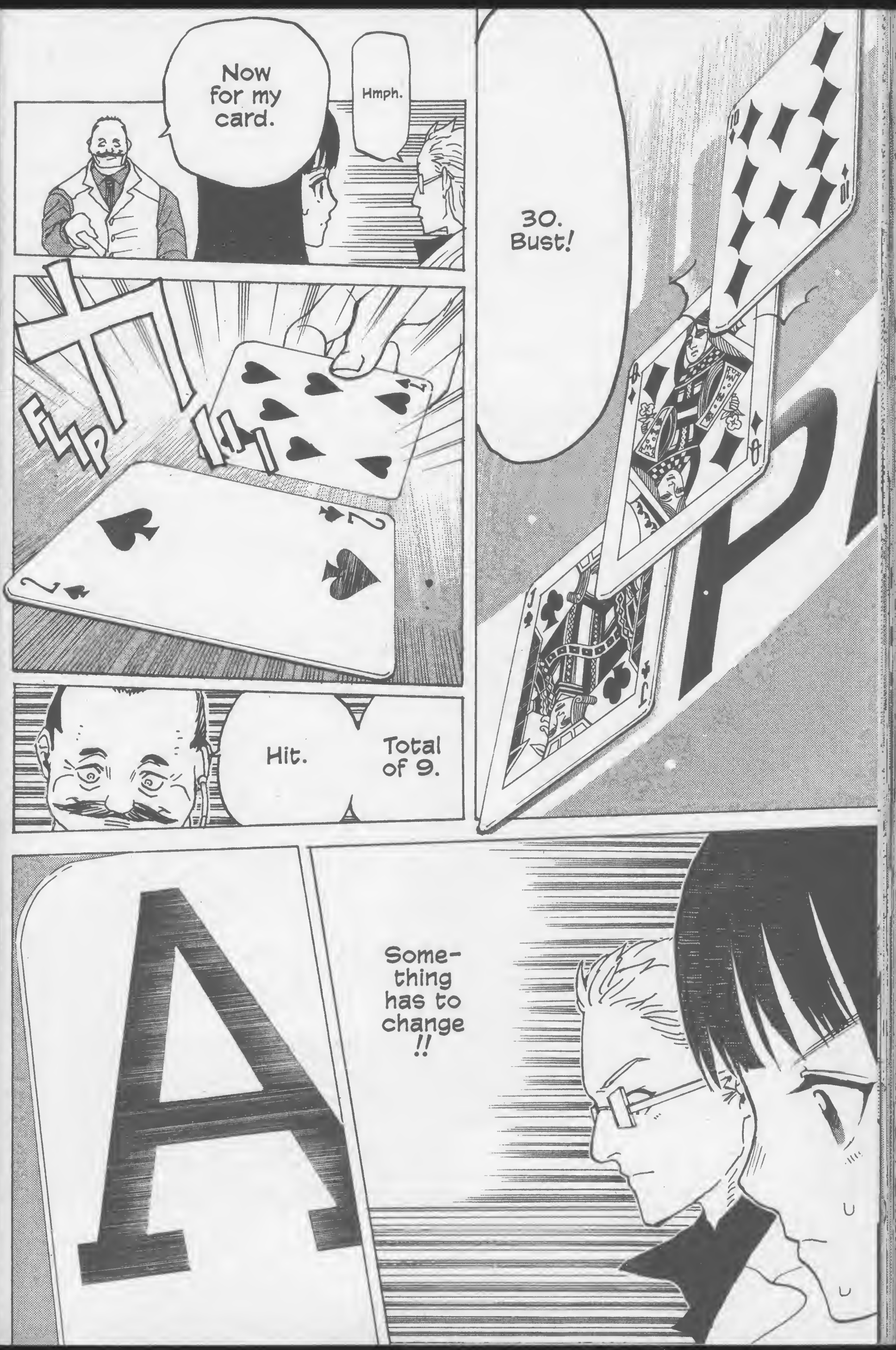

Hm...
We've reached the end of the deck.
Impossible...
What's going on?

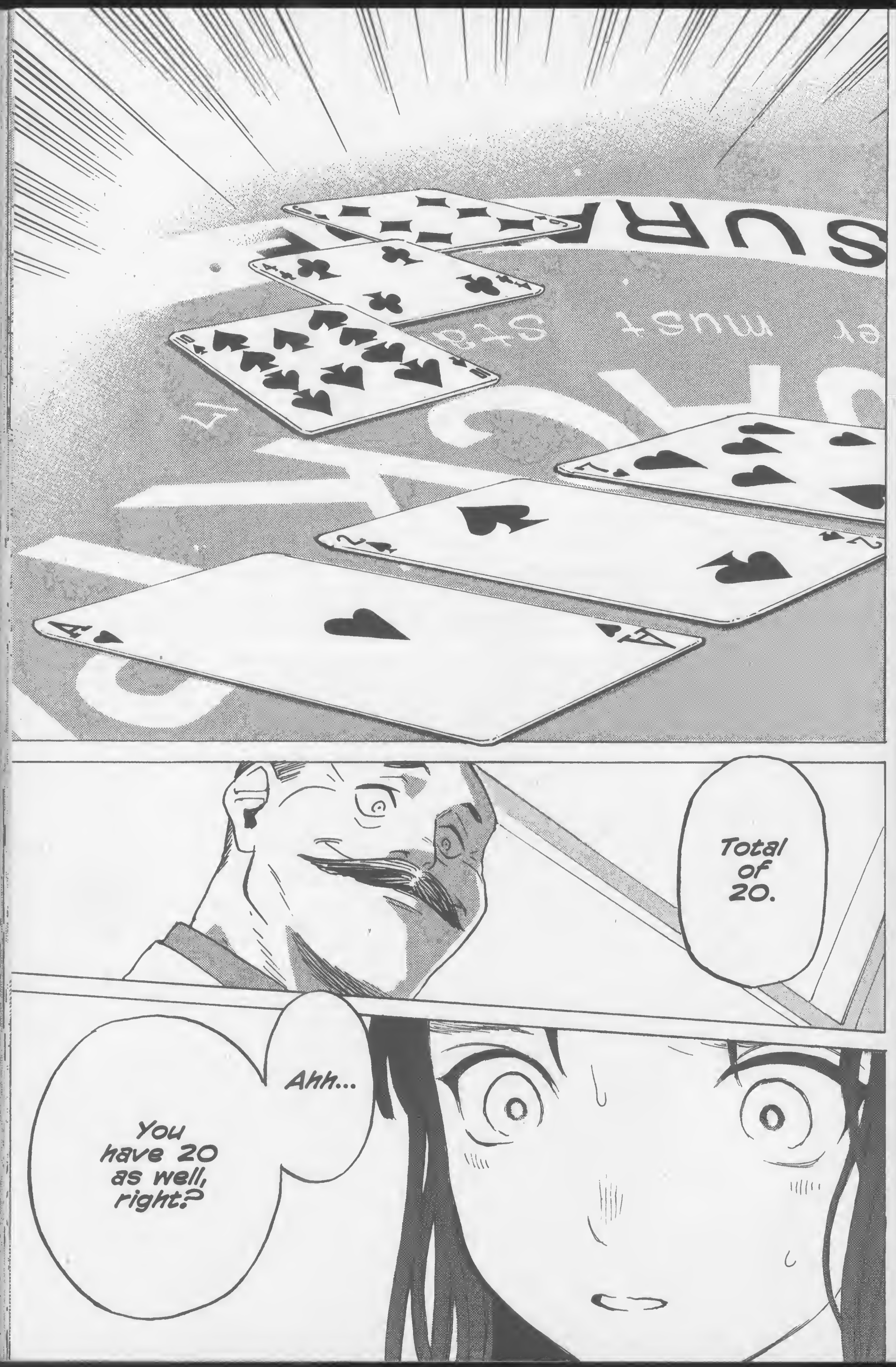

The last 28 games have been pushes!!
This is very unusual!
The numbers have come up randomly.
The cards aren't ordered with any kind of regularity.
Nothing unusual when he shuffles.
Yet...
THUD
8
5
3
2
8
9
10

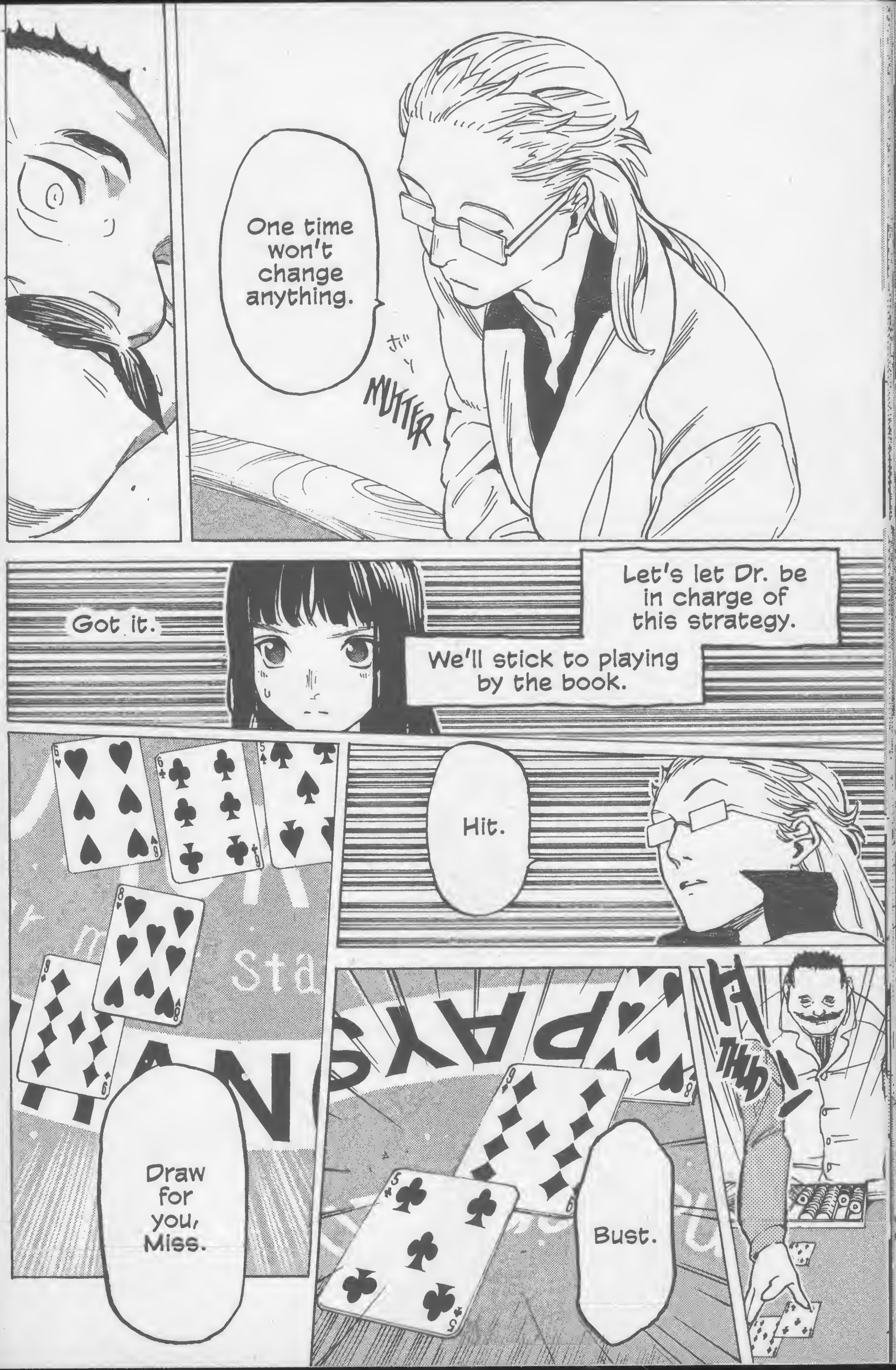

My, my.
Another draw.
Œuf-coque... what's going on?

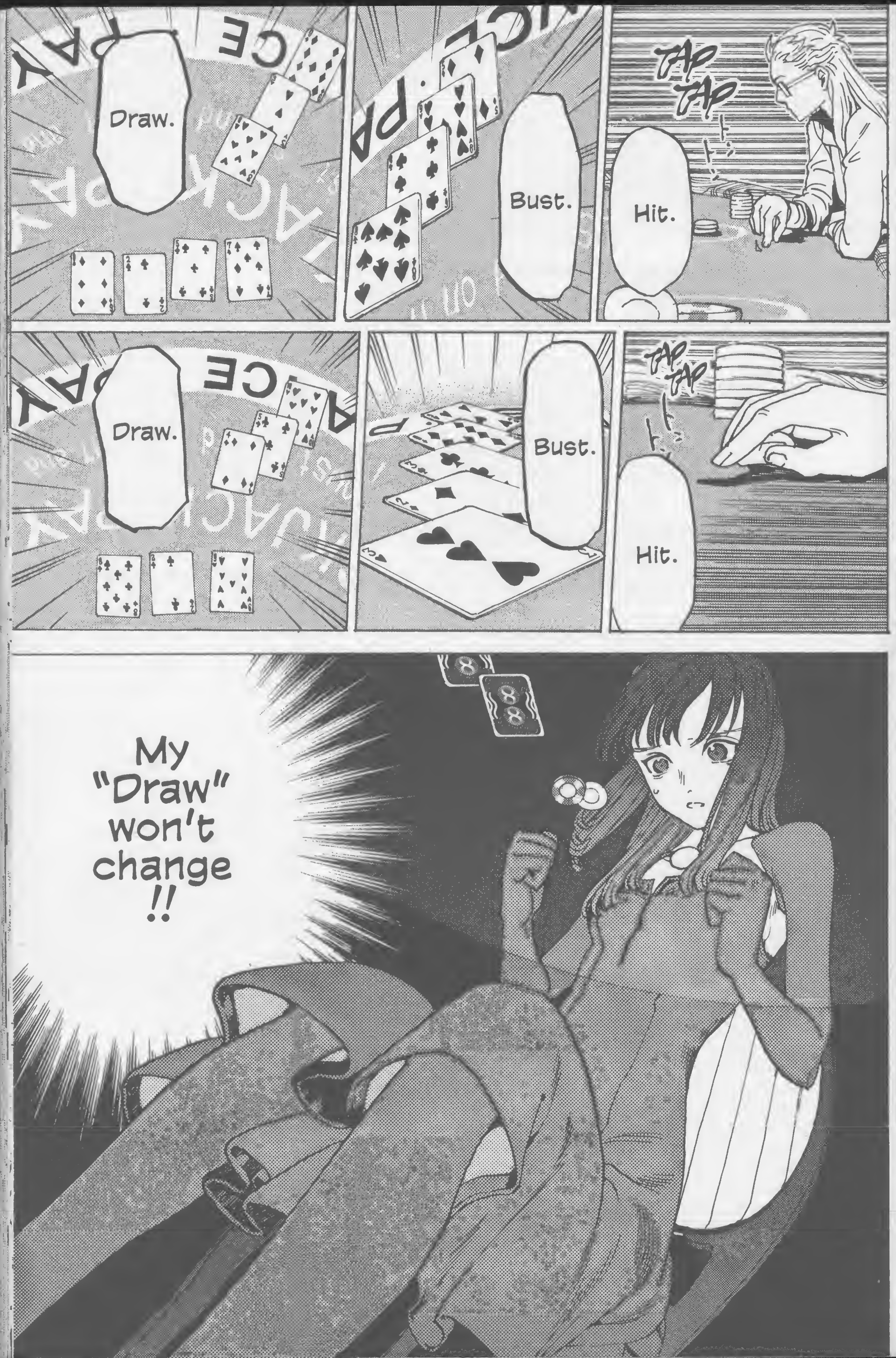

Hit.
PULL
!?
On a 20... why?
Dr. is trying to change the card order!
TAP
Ashley might be lining up the cards according to how he *thinks* we'll play.
So if we go off the playbook, that could throw off the card order!

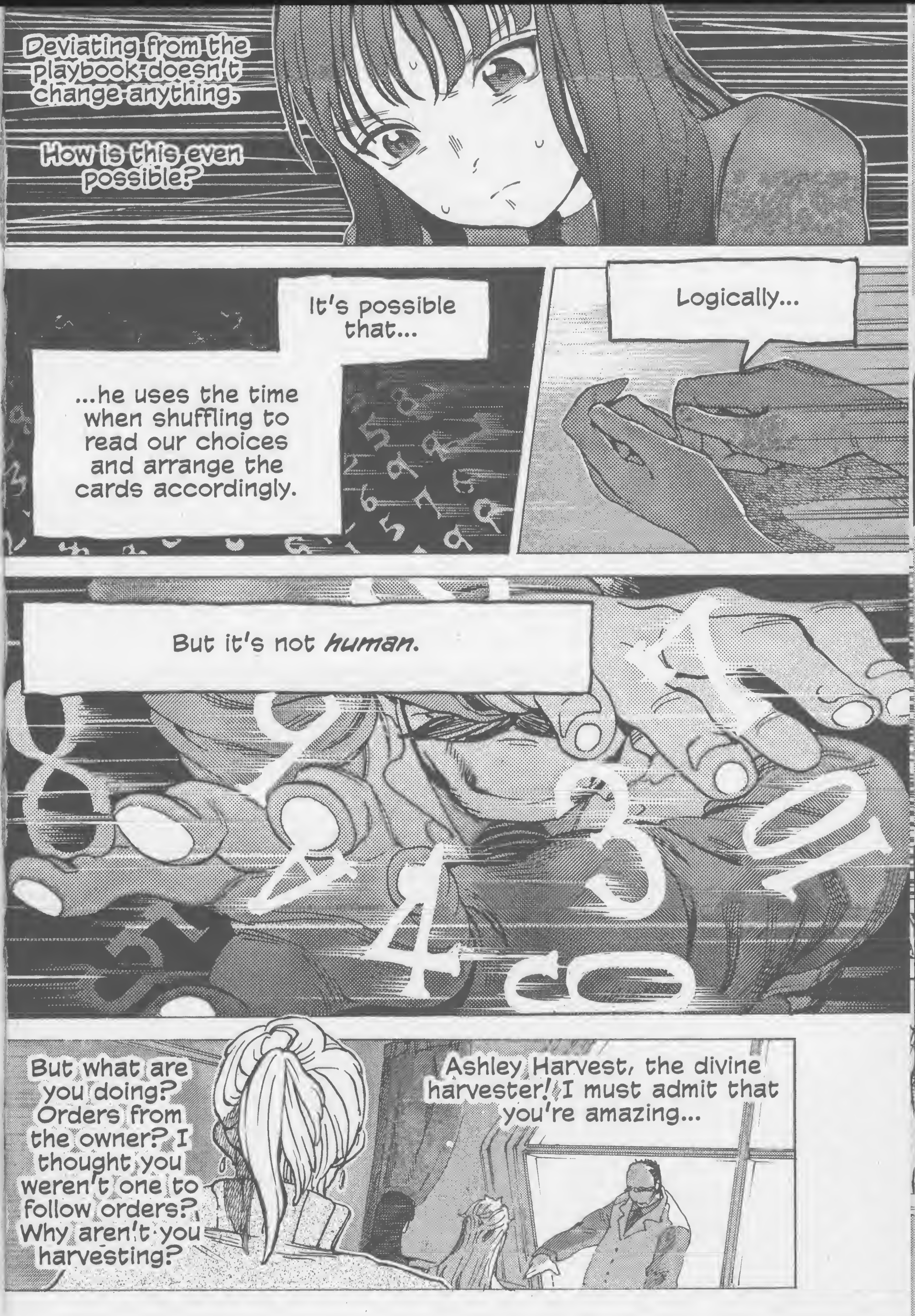

I don't know, either...
I tried to get a scent from him but it's all jumbled...
The only thing I know for sure...
So why the draws?
If he wants to win the $1 million back shouldn't he be making us lose?
Is that he's manipulating the card order somehow.
Without a bit of error.

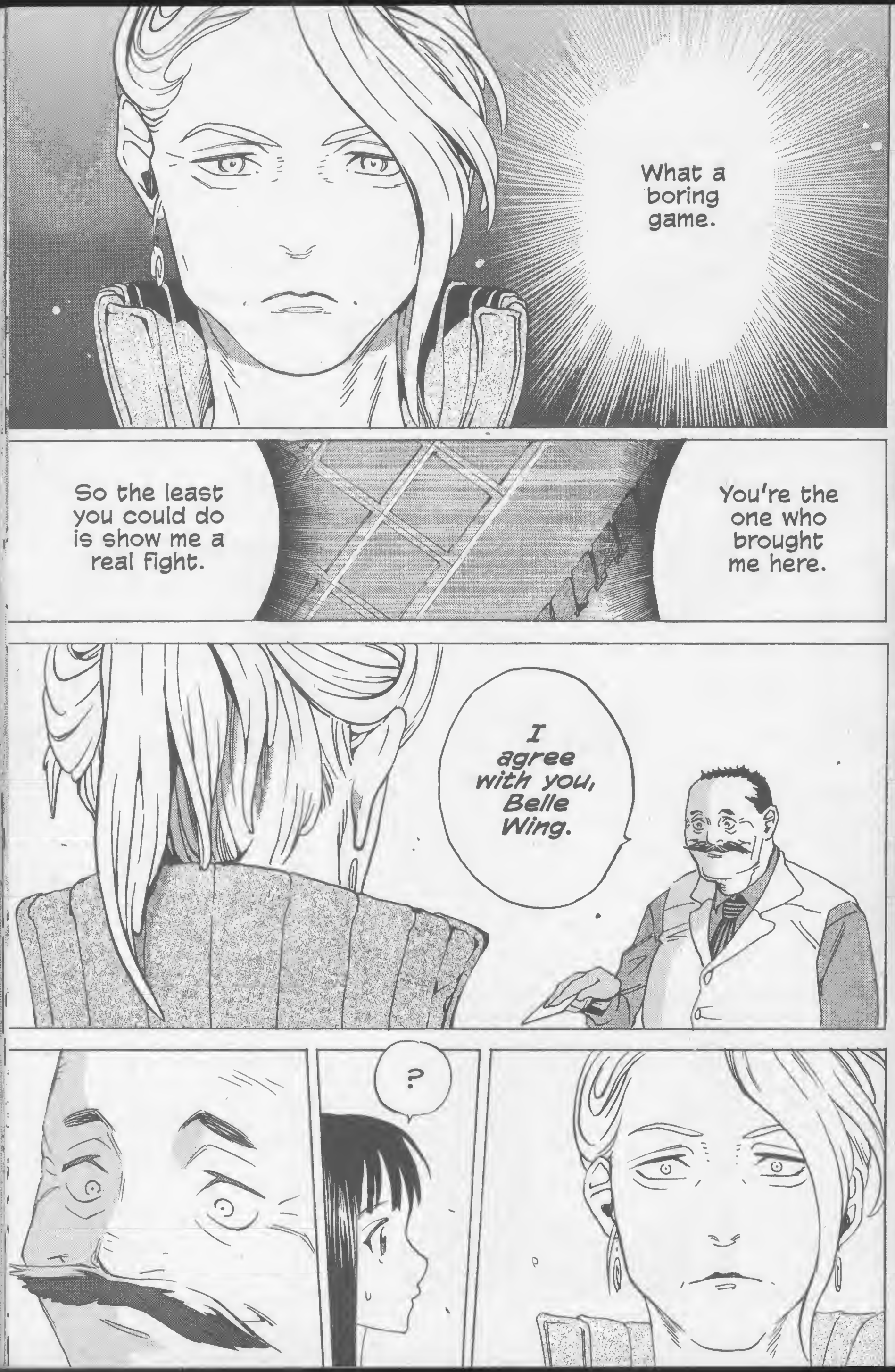

30. Bust!
Hmph.
Now for my card.
Flip
Hit.
Total of 9.
Some-thing has to change !!

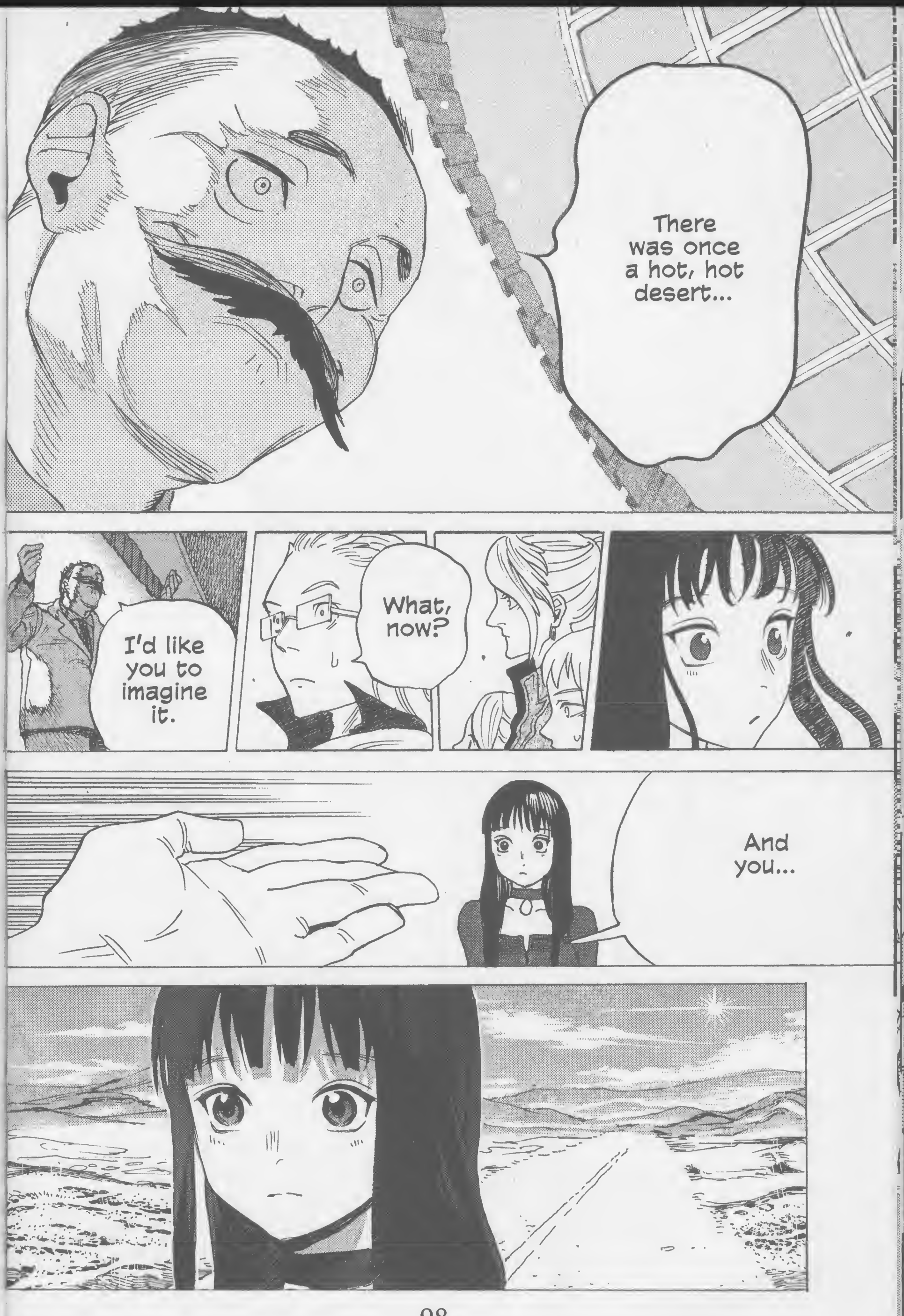

Total of 20.
Ahh...
You have 20 as well, right?

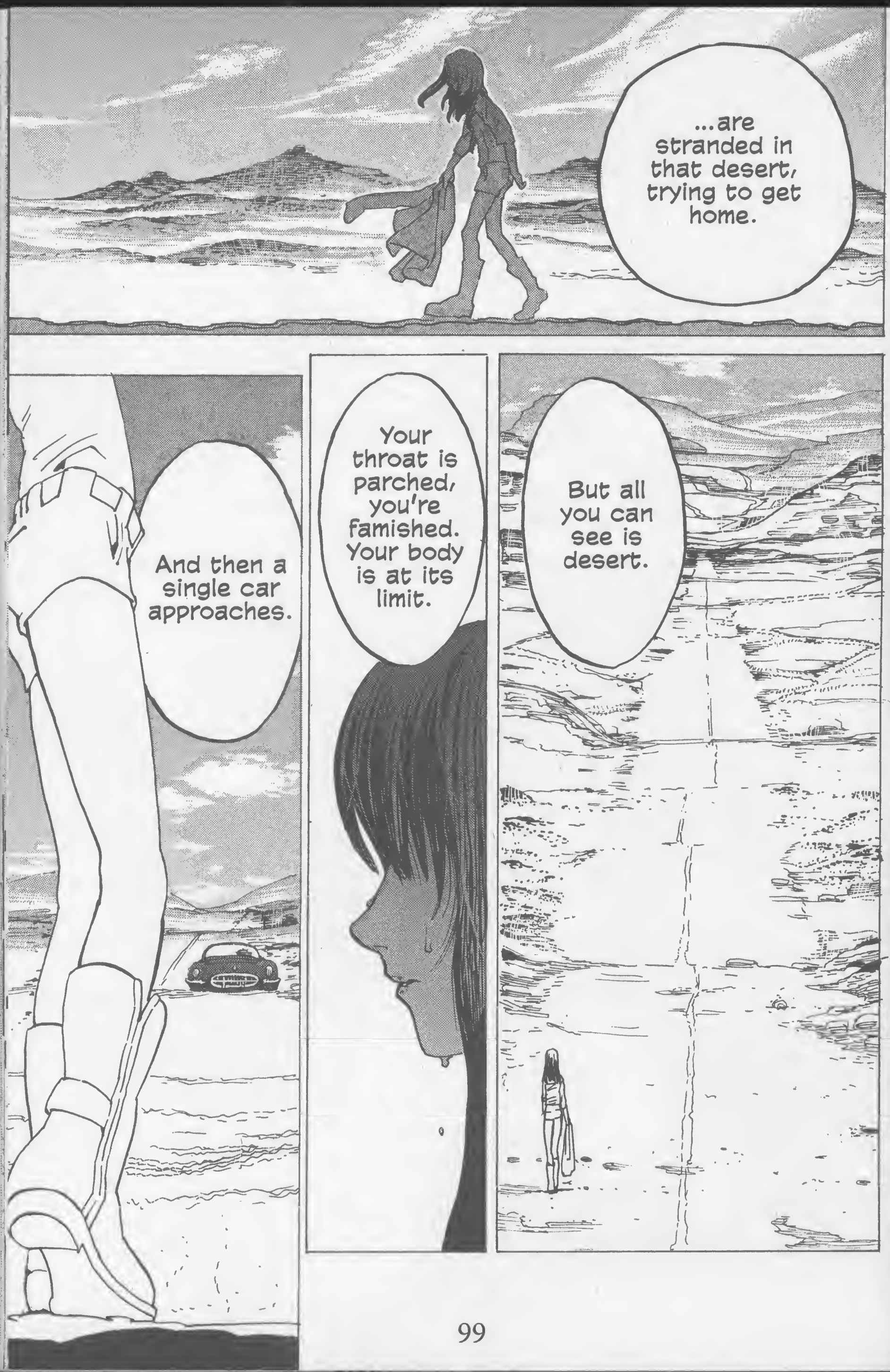

One time won't change anything.
MUTTER
Let's let Dr. be in charge of this strategy.
We'll stick to playing by the book.
Got it.
Hit.
THUD
Bust.
Draw for you, Miss.

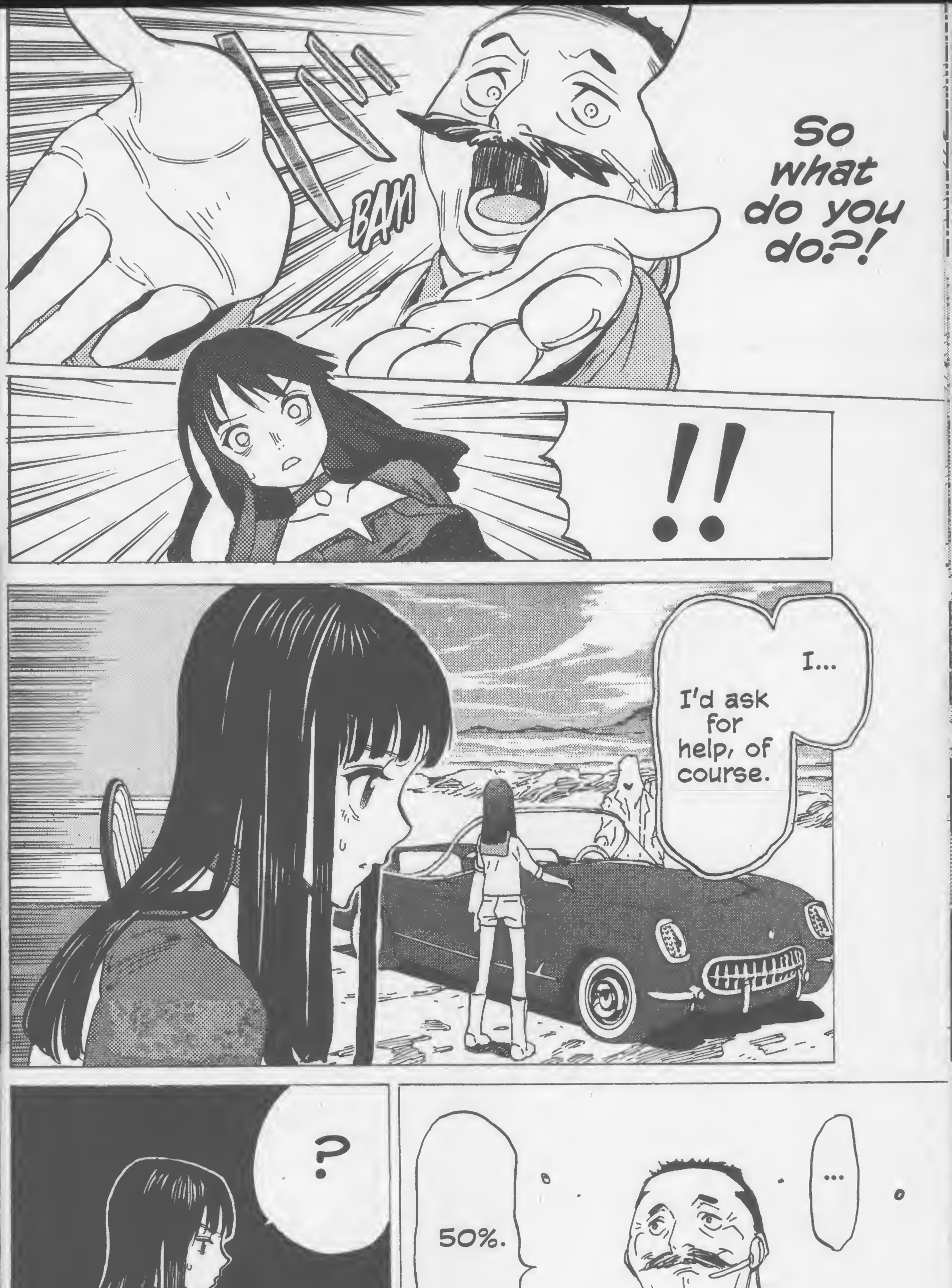

TAP TAP
Hit.
Bust.
Draw.
TAP TAP
Hit.
Bust.
Draw.
My "Draw" won't change!!

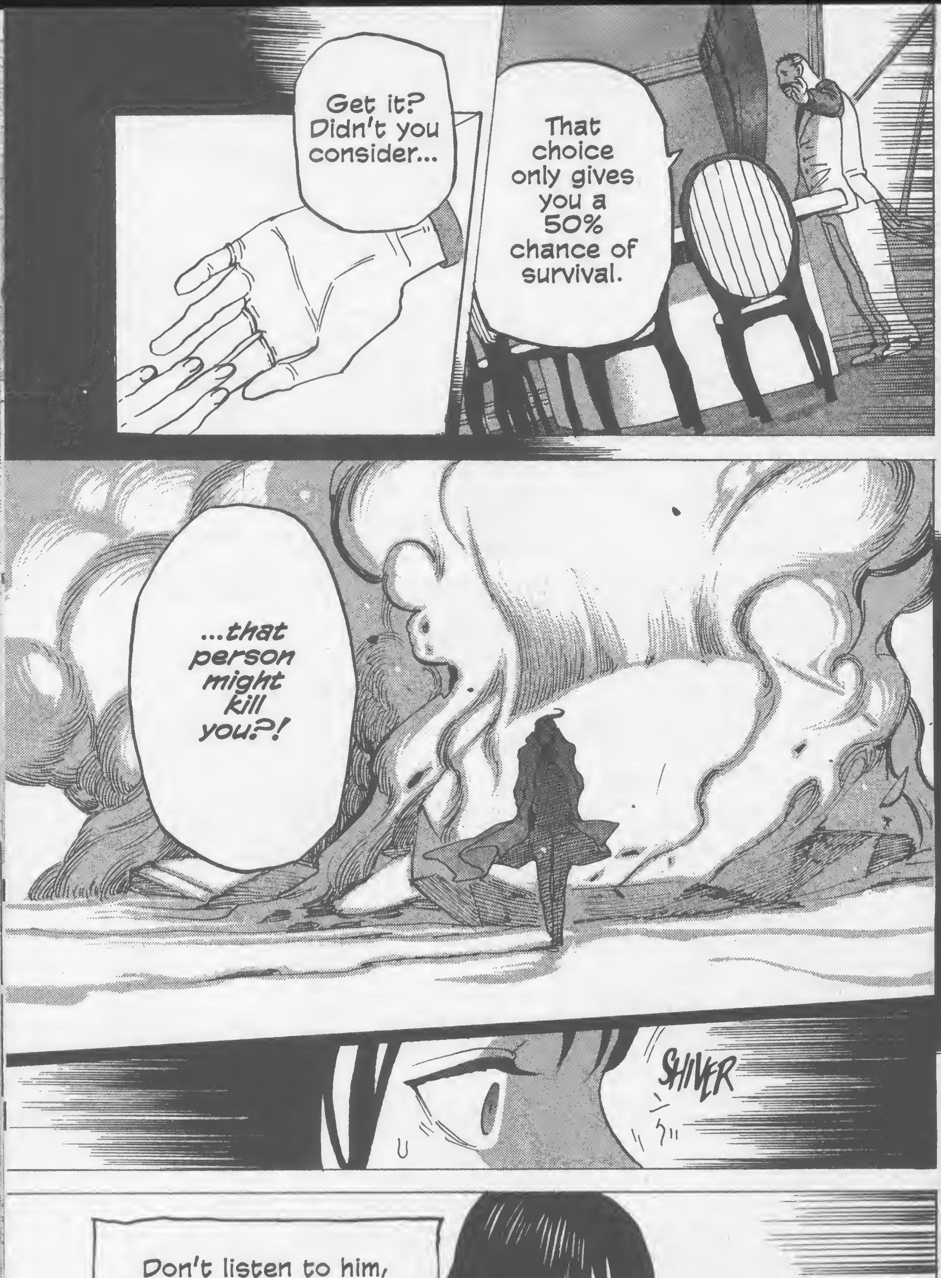

Deviating from the playbook doesn't change anything.
How is this even possible?
Logically...
It's possible that...
...he uses the time when shuffling to read our choices and arrange the cards accordingly.
But it's not *human.*
Ashley Harvest, the divine harvester! I must admit that you're amazing...
But what are you doing? Orders from the owner? I thought you weren't one to follow orders? Why aren't you harvesting?

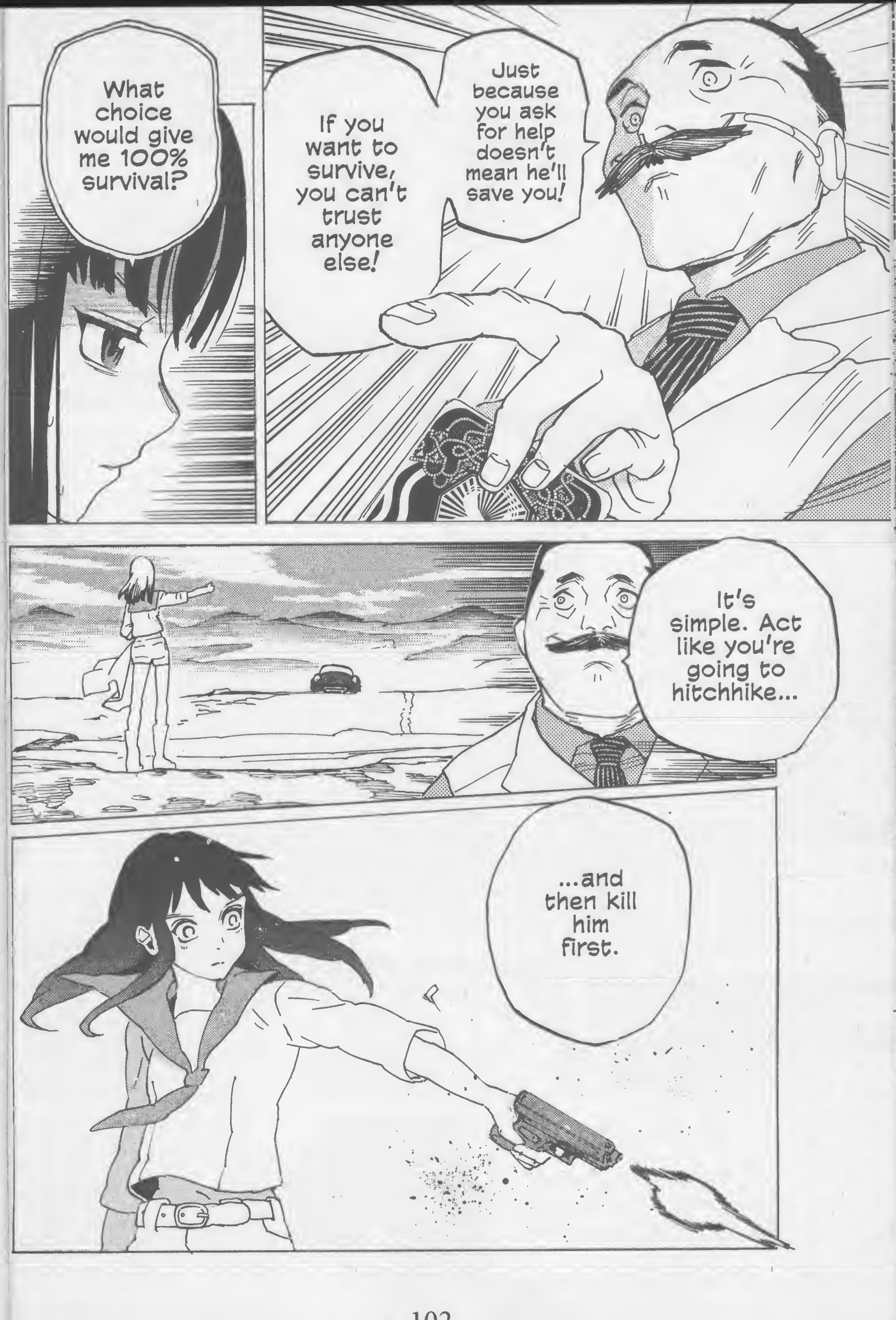

What a boring game.
You're the one who brought me here.
So the least you could do is show me a real fight.
I agree with you, Belle Wing.
?

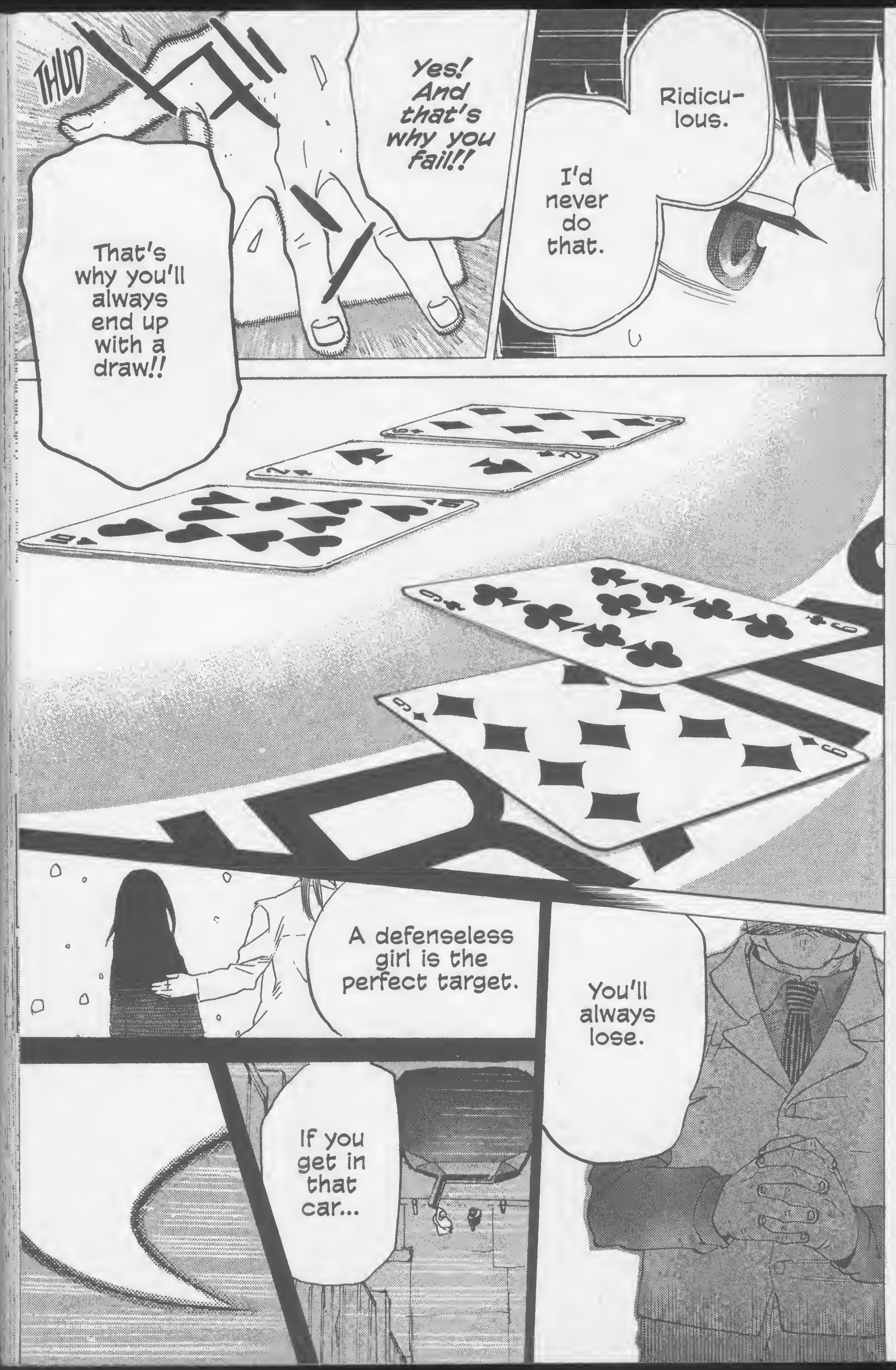

There was once a hot, hot desert...
What, now?
I'd like you to imagine it.
And you...

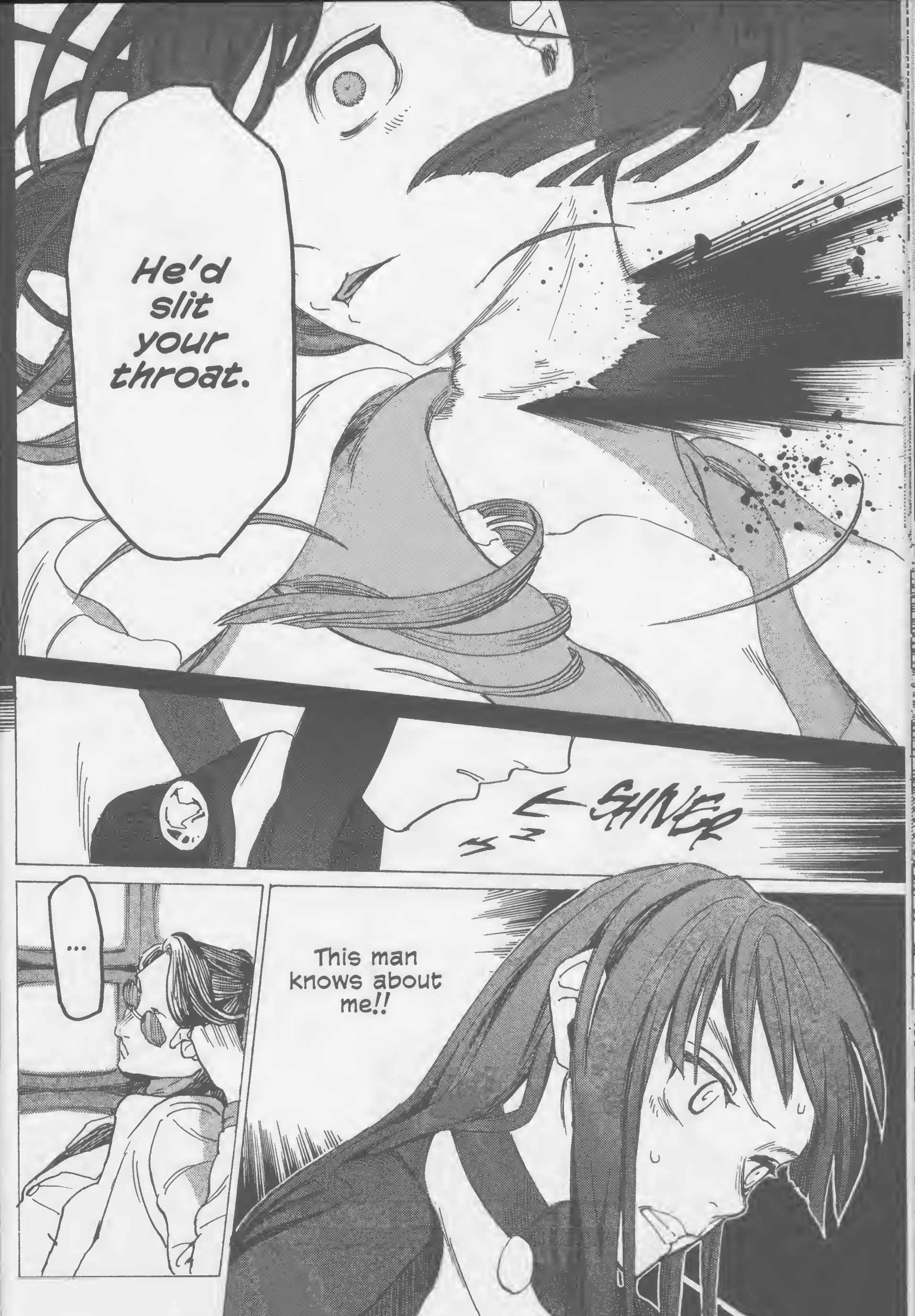

...are stranded in that desert, trying to get home.
But all you can see is desert.
Your throat is parched, you're famished. Your body is at its limit.
And then a single car approaches.

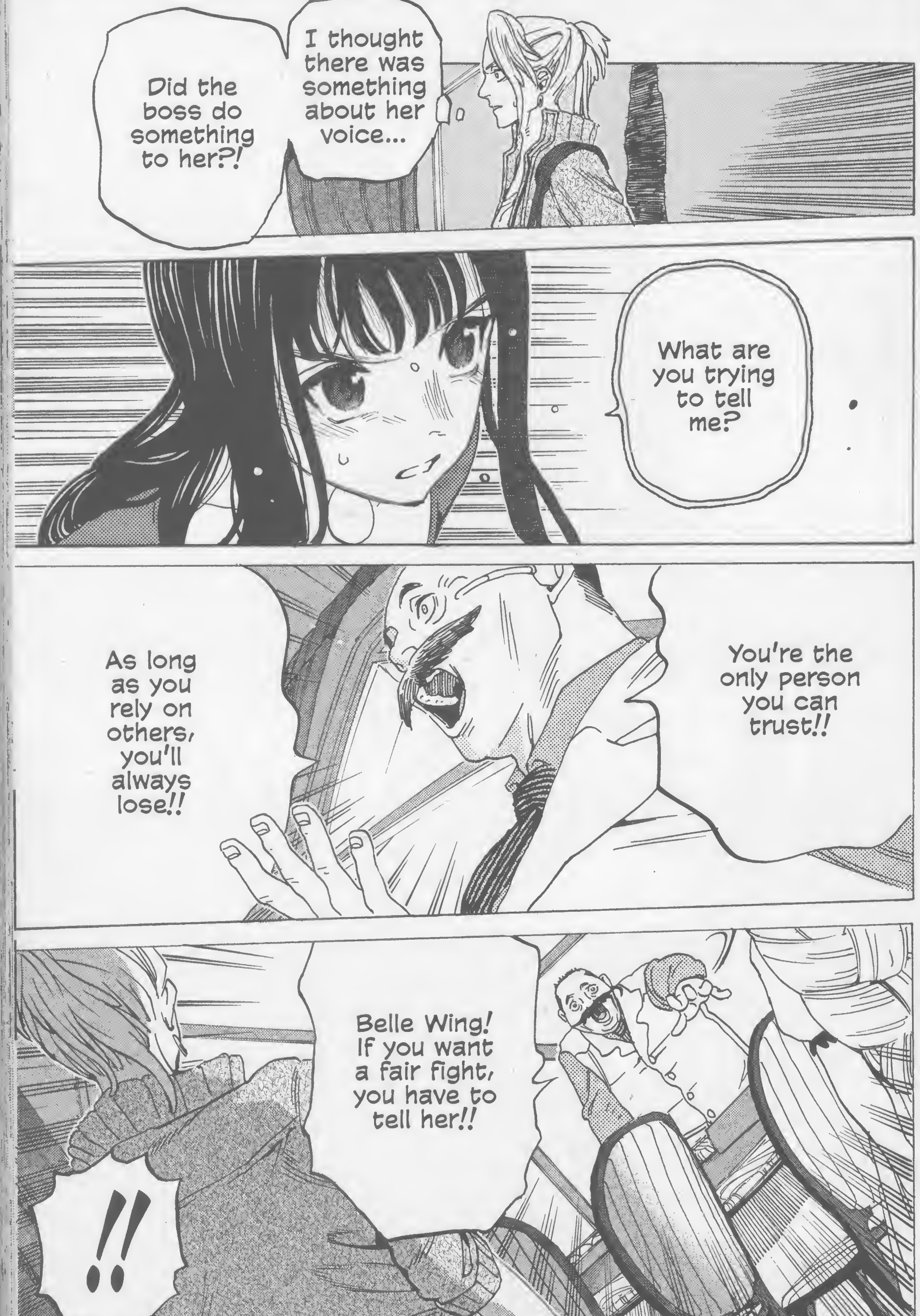

BAM
So what do you do?!
!!
I...
I'd ask for help, of course.
...
50%.
?

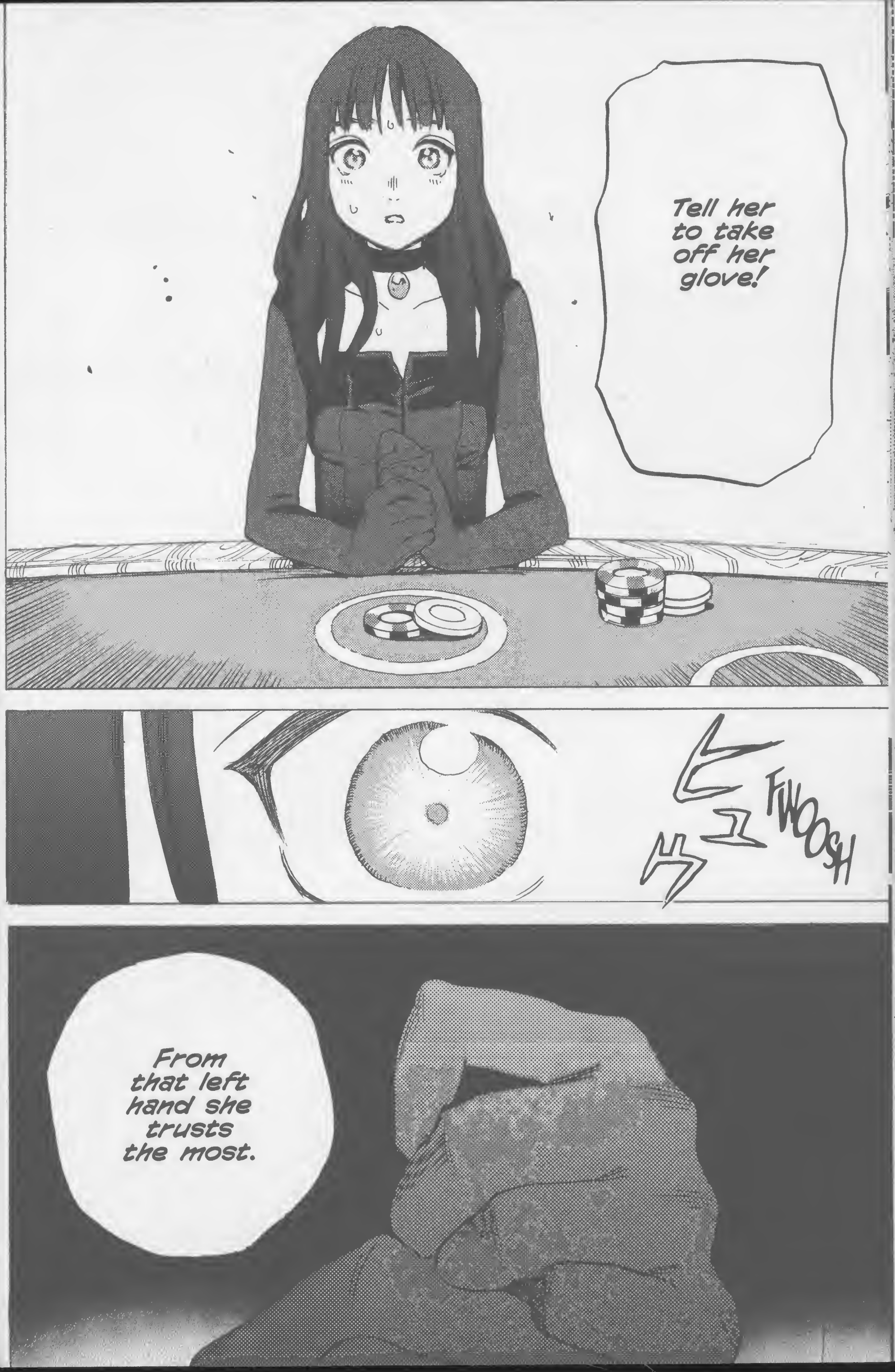

That choice only gives you a 50% chance of survival.
Get it? Didn't you consider...
...that person might kill you?!
SHIVER
Phew.
Don't listen to him, Balot! This has nothing to do with the game!

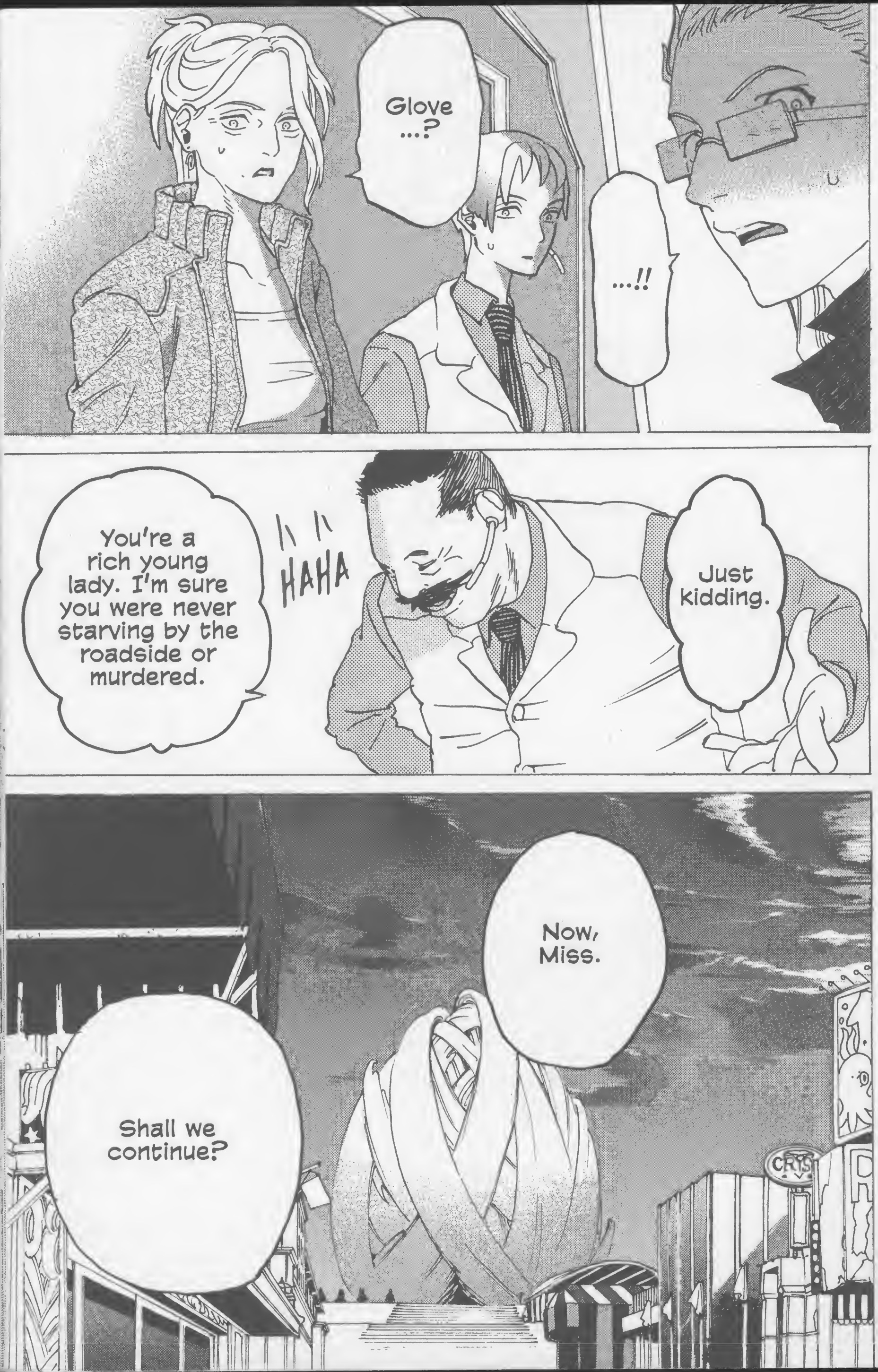

Just because you ask for help doesn't mean he'll save you!
If you want to survive, you can't trust anyone else!
What choice would give me 100% survival?
It's simple. Act like you're going to hitchhike...
...and then kill him first.


Ridiculous.
I'd never do that.
Yes! And that's why you fail!!
THUD
That's why you'll always end up with a draw!!
A defenseless girl is the perfect target.
If you get in that car...
You'll always lose.


He'd slit your throat.
SHING
...
This man knows about me!!


I thought there was something about her voice...
Did the boss do something to her?!
What are you trying to tell me?
You're the only person you can trust!!
As long as you rely on others, you'll always lose!!
Belle Wing! If you want a fair fight, you have to tell her!!
!!

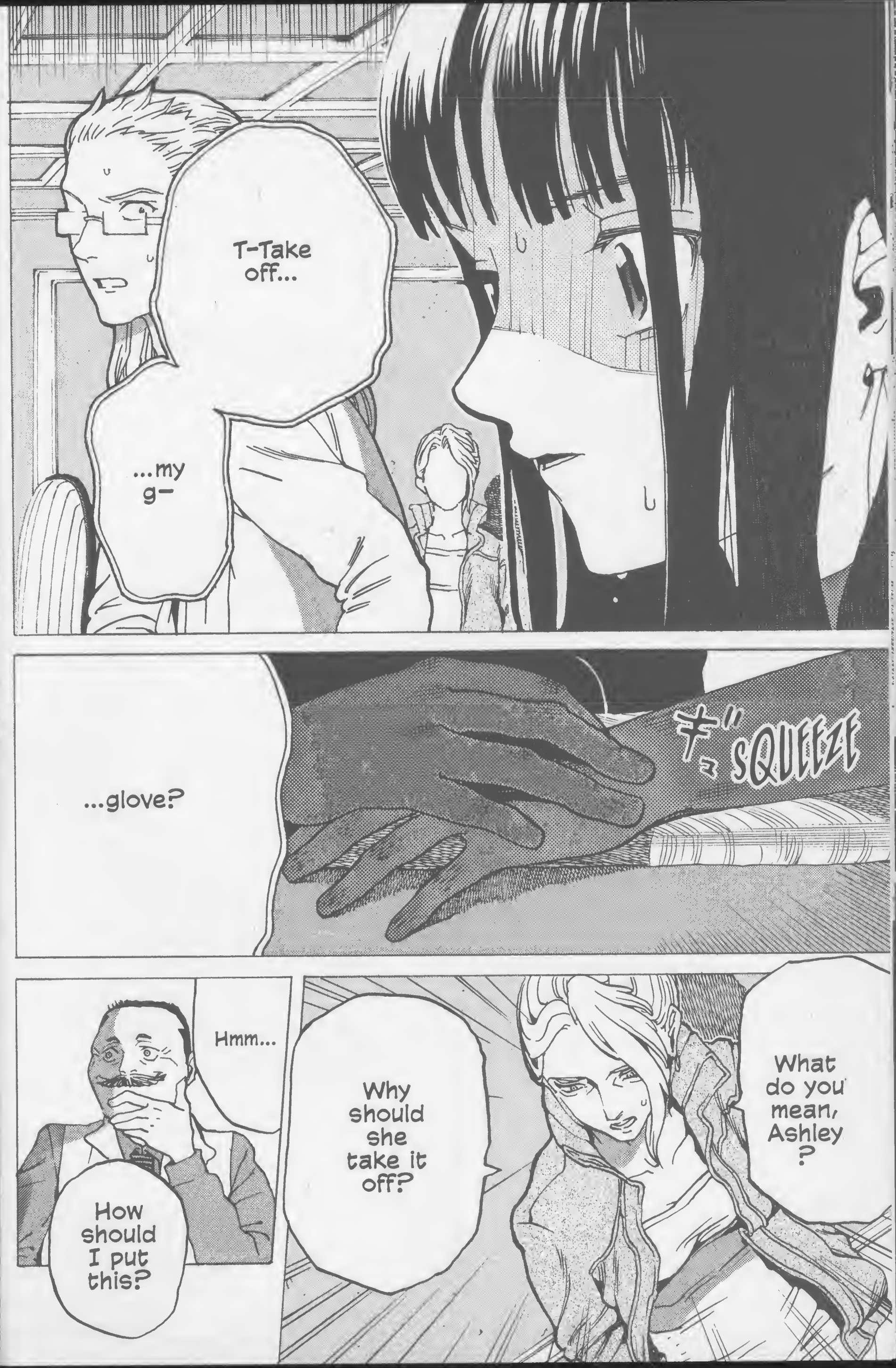

Tell her to take off her glove!
ヒュウ
FWOOSH
From that left hand she trusts the most.

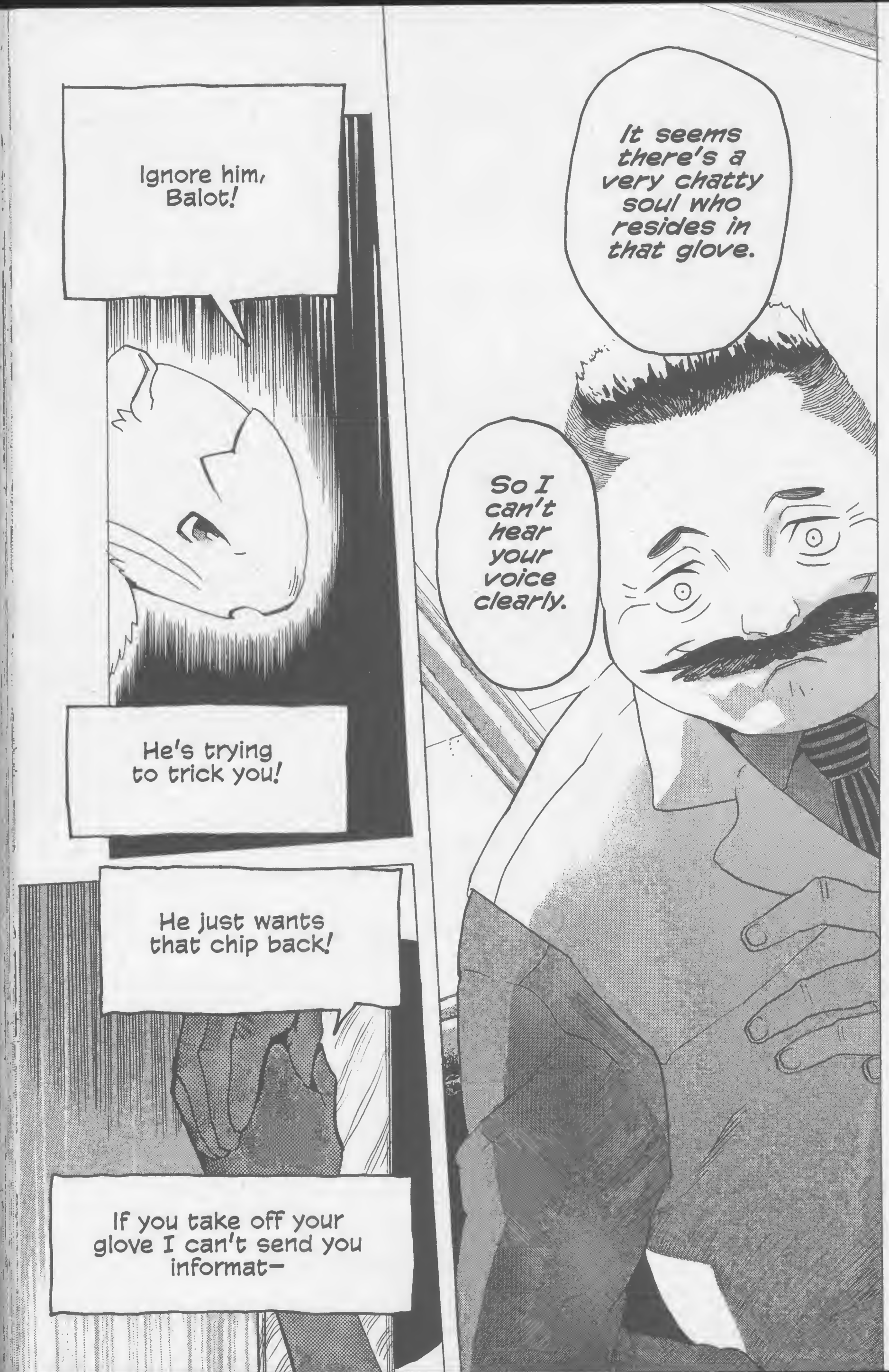

...!!
Glove ...?
You're a rich young lady. I'm sure you were never starving by the roadside or murdered.
ハハ
HAHA
Just kidding.
Now, Miss.
Shall we continue?

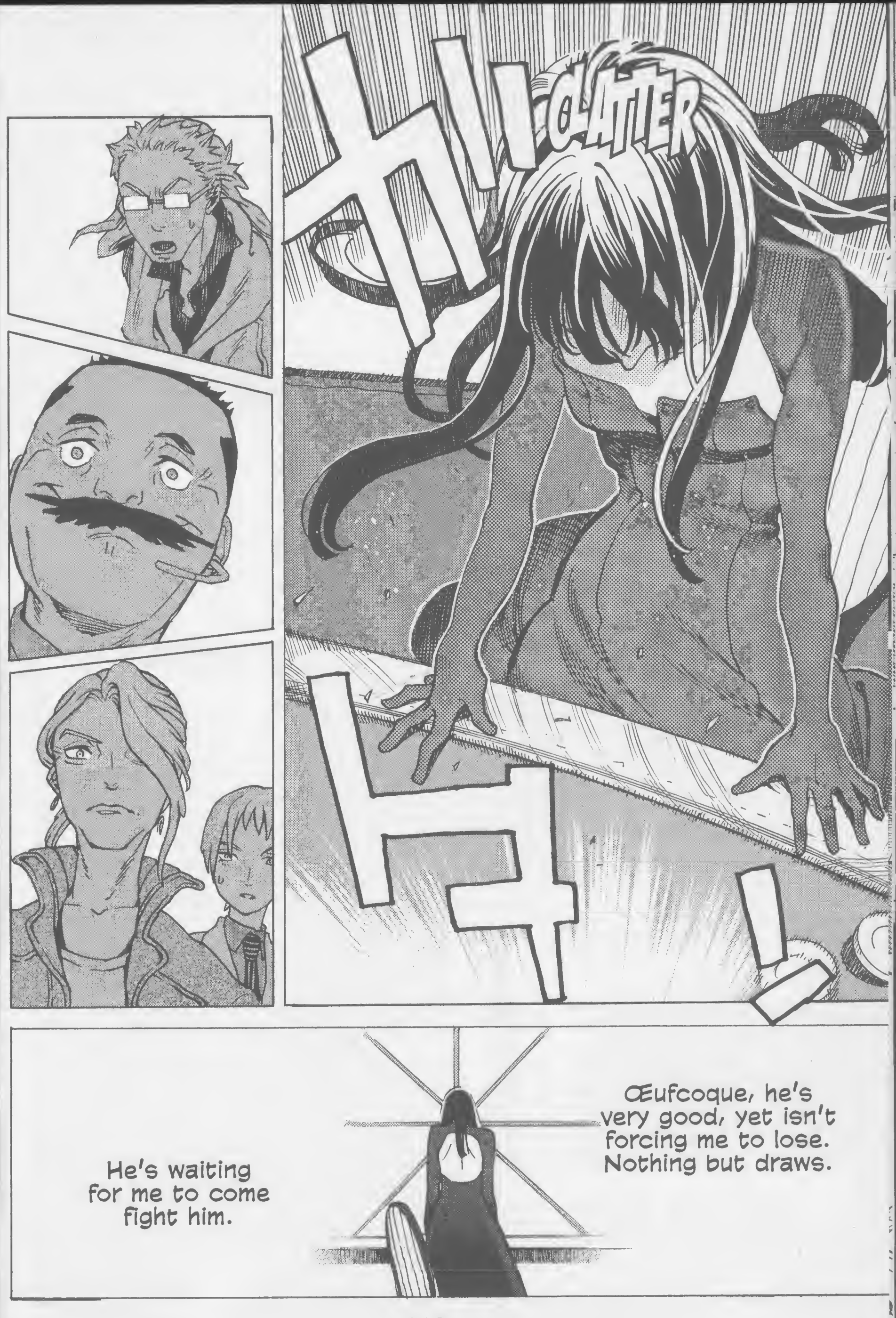
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

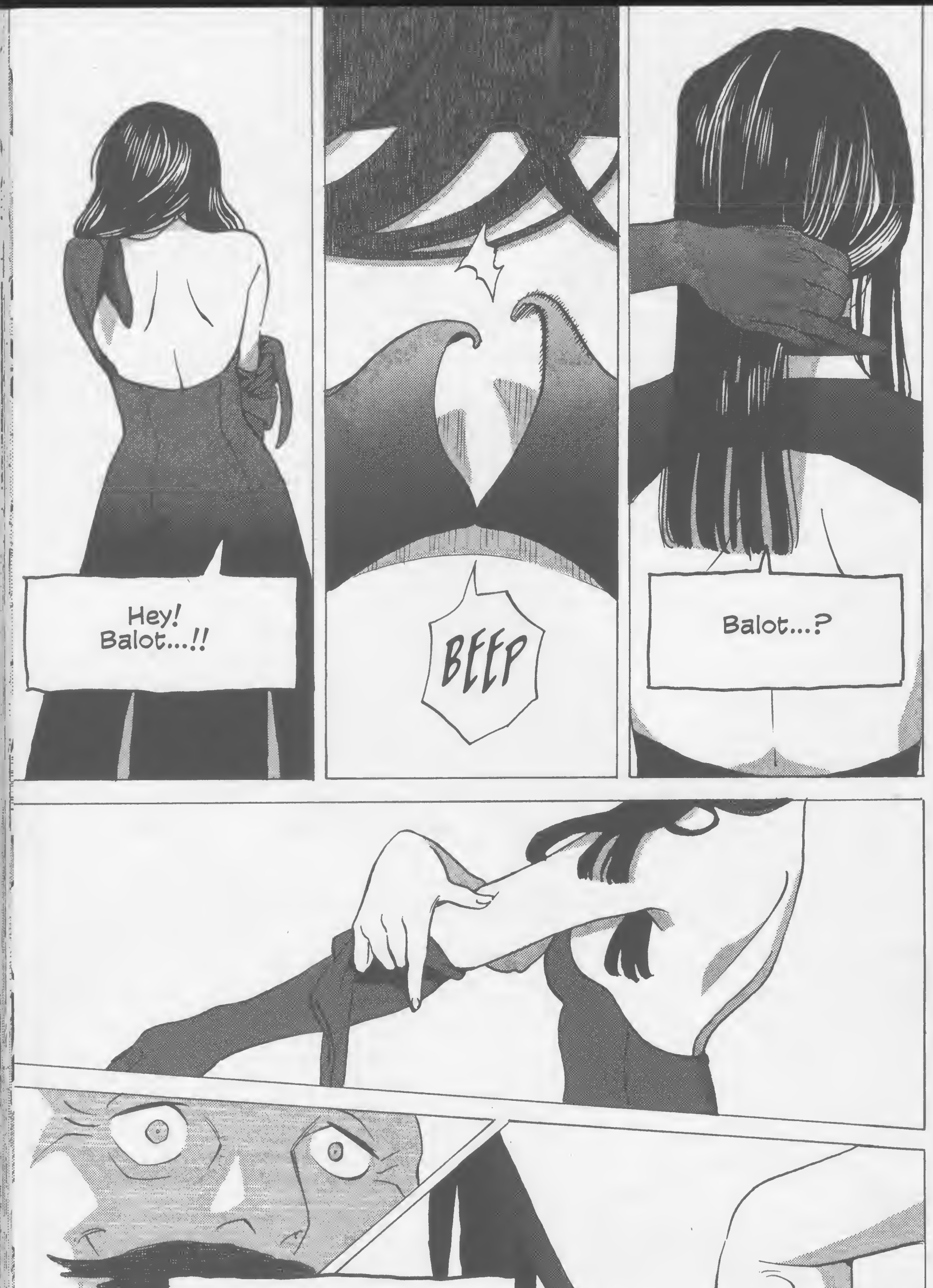
Chapter 24: Manifold (2)

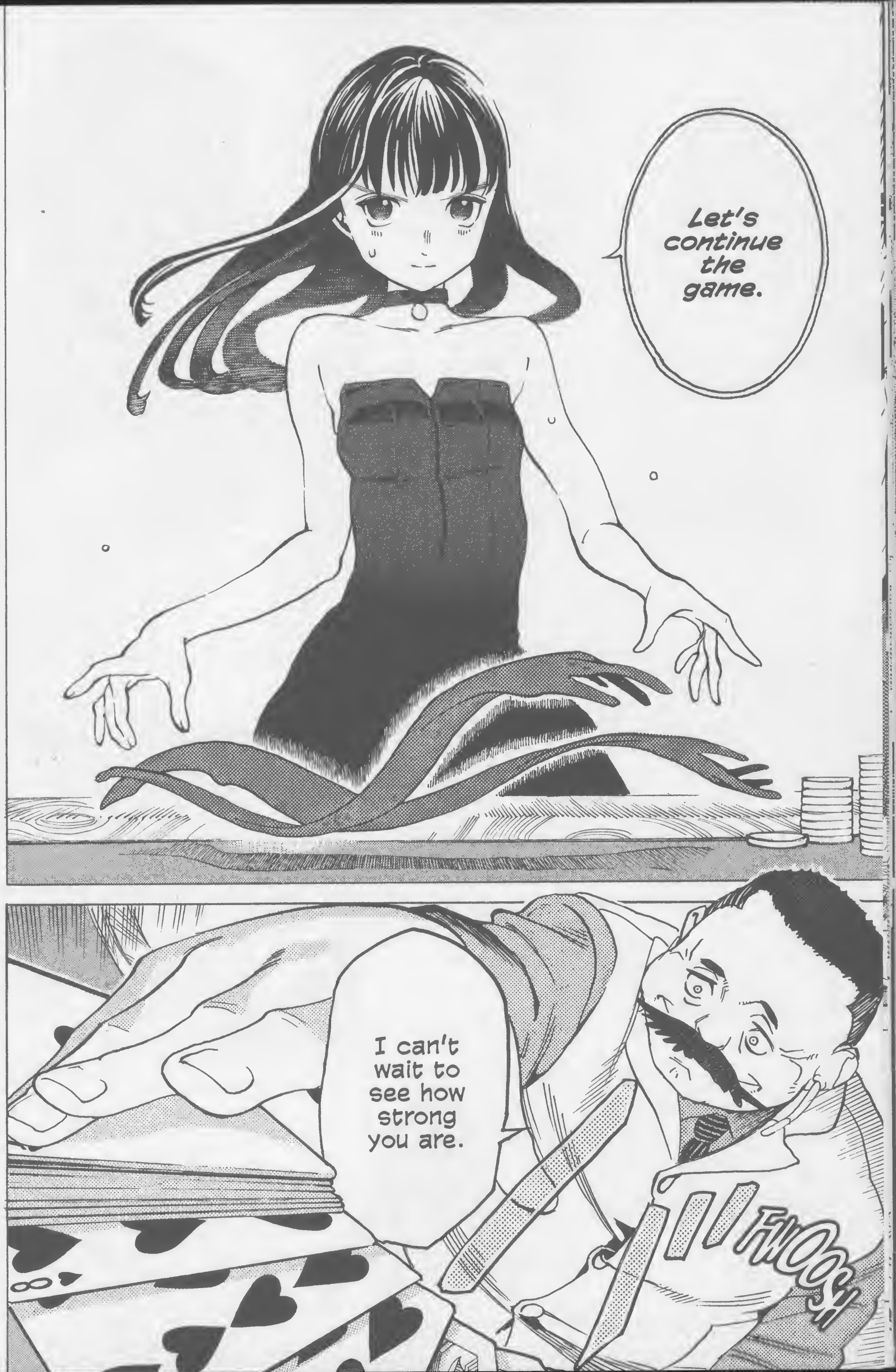
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

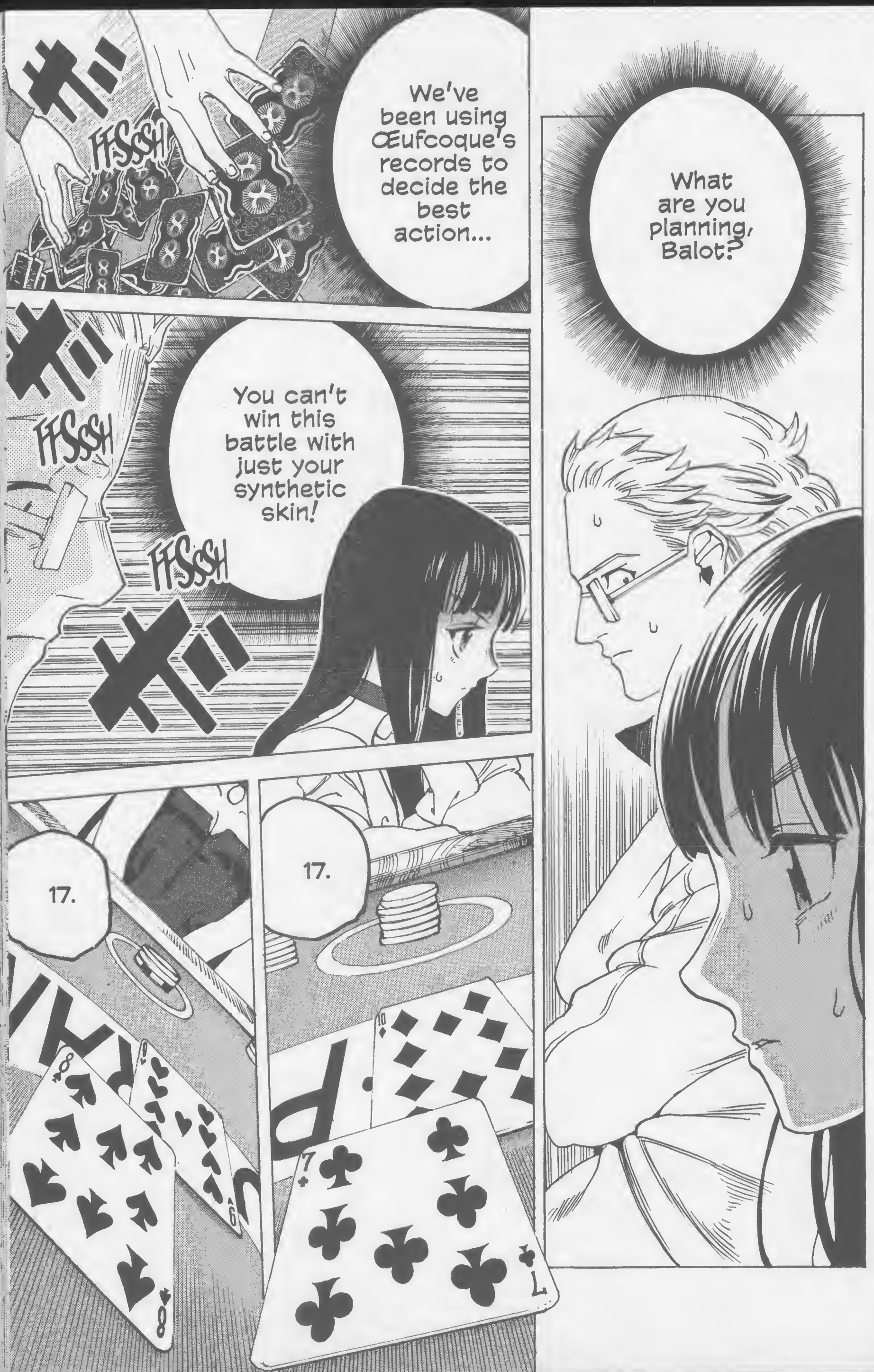

T-Take off...
...my g-
...glove?
ギュ
SQUEEZE
What do you mean, Ashley?
Why should she take it off?
Hmm...
How should I put this?

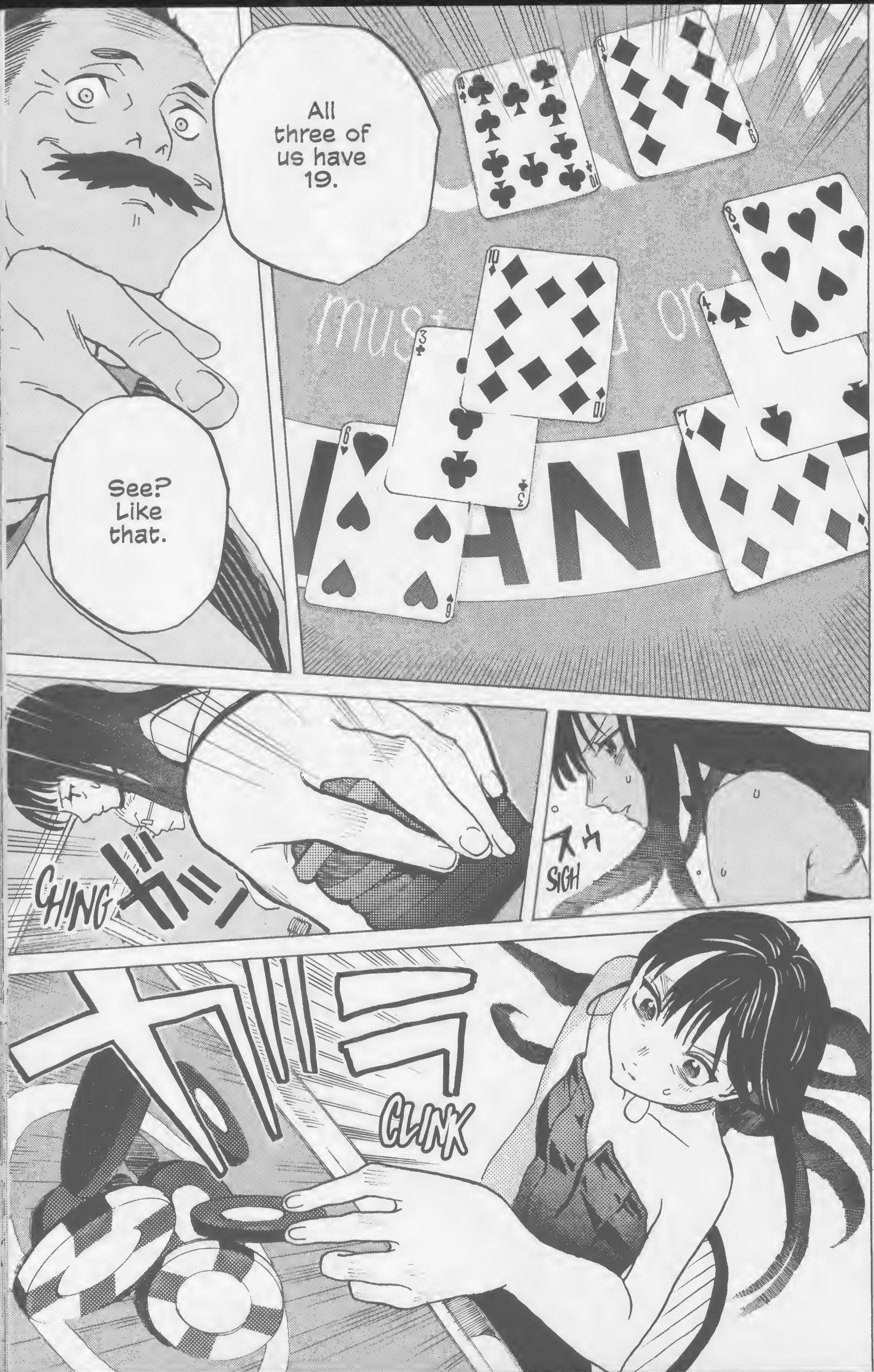

It seems there's a very chatty soul who resides in that glove.
So I can't hear your voice clearly.
Ignore him, Balot!
He's trying to trick you!
He just wants that chip back!
If you take off your glove I can't send you informat-

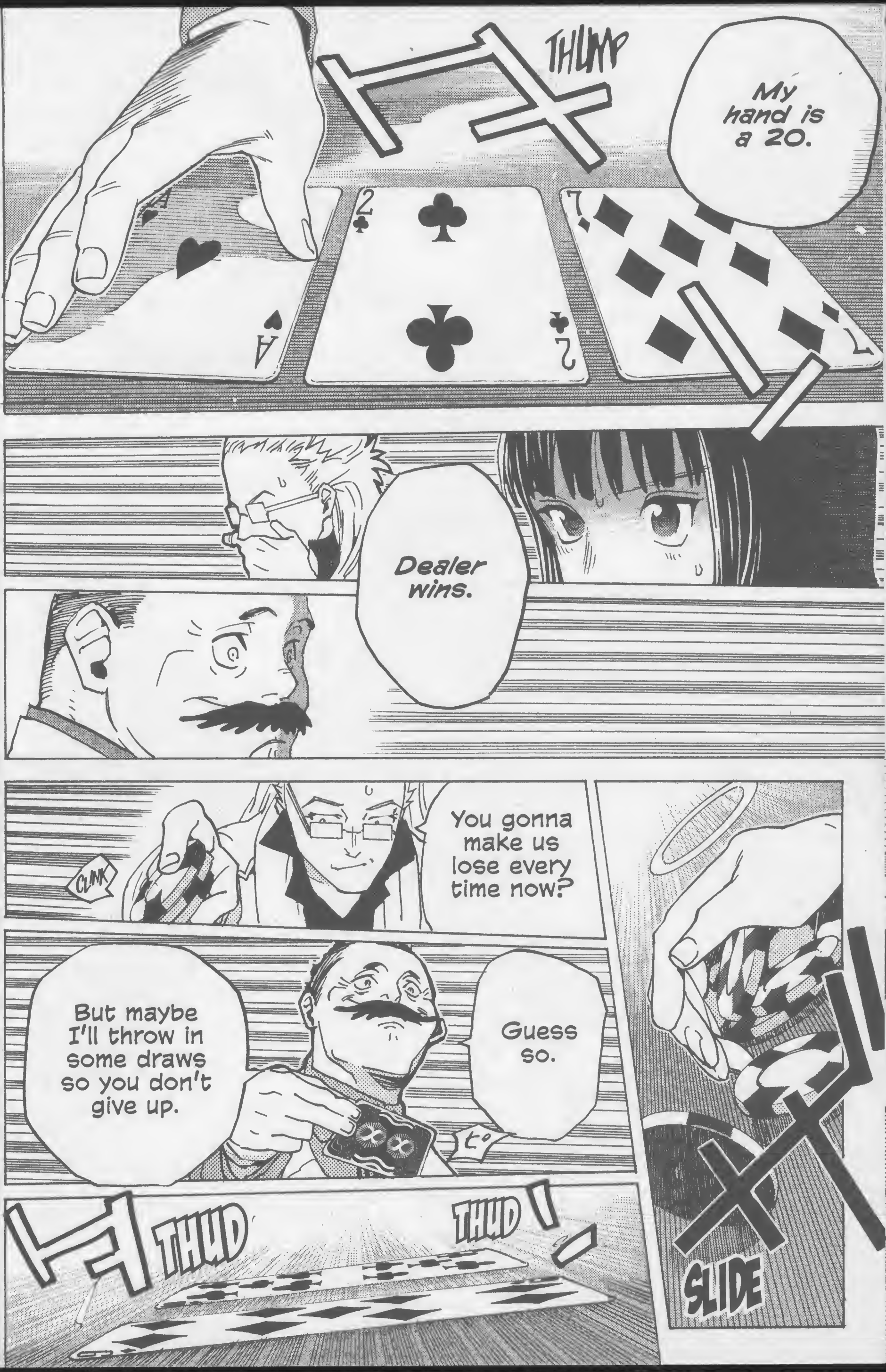

CLATTER
Œufcoque, he's very good, yet isn't forcing me to lose. Nothing but draws.
He's waiting for me to come fight him.

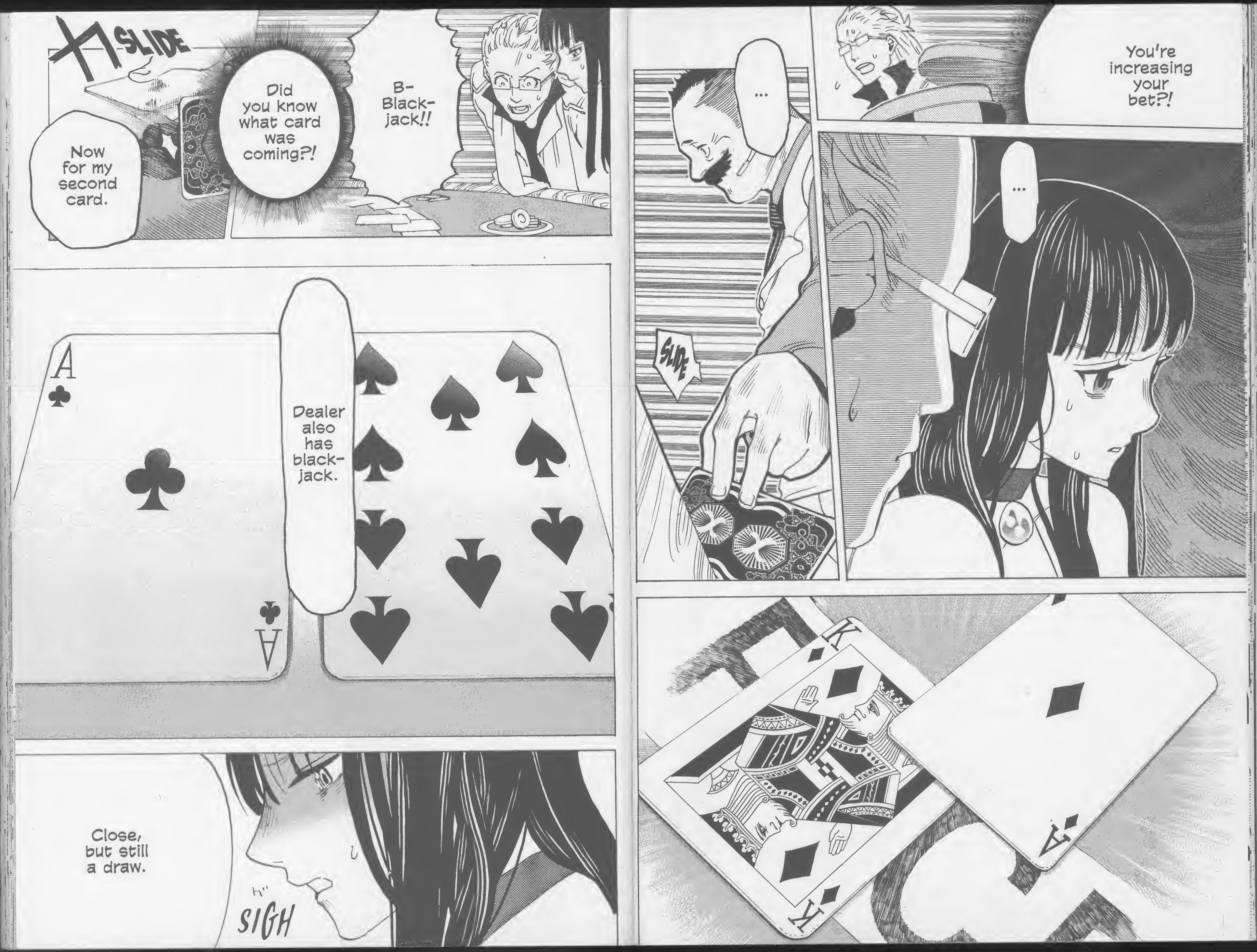

Balot...?
BEEP
Hey! Balot...!!
Balot!! Stop it, now!!
GRIN

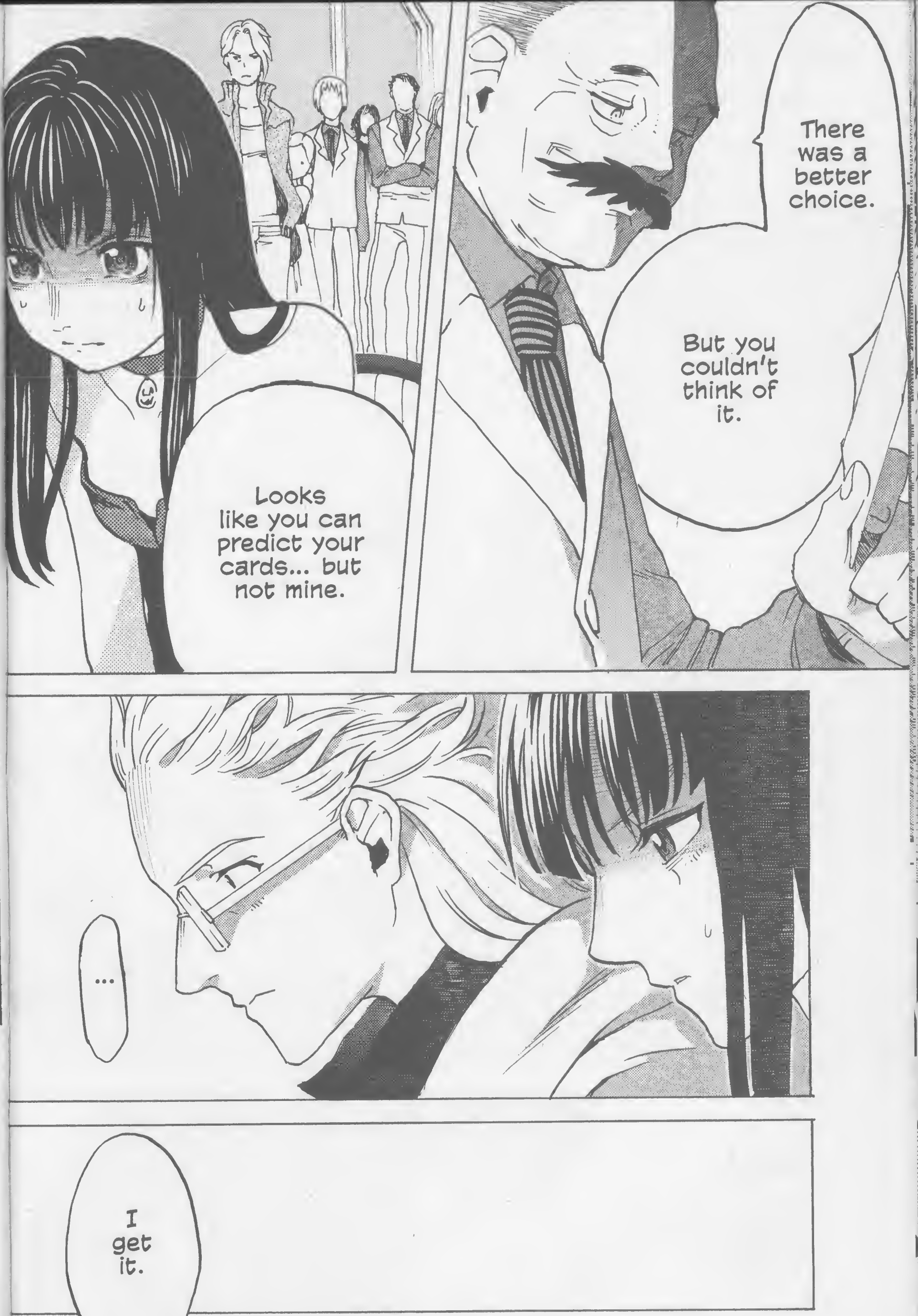

Let's continue the game.
I can't wait to see how strong you are.
FWOOSH

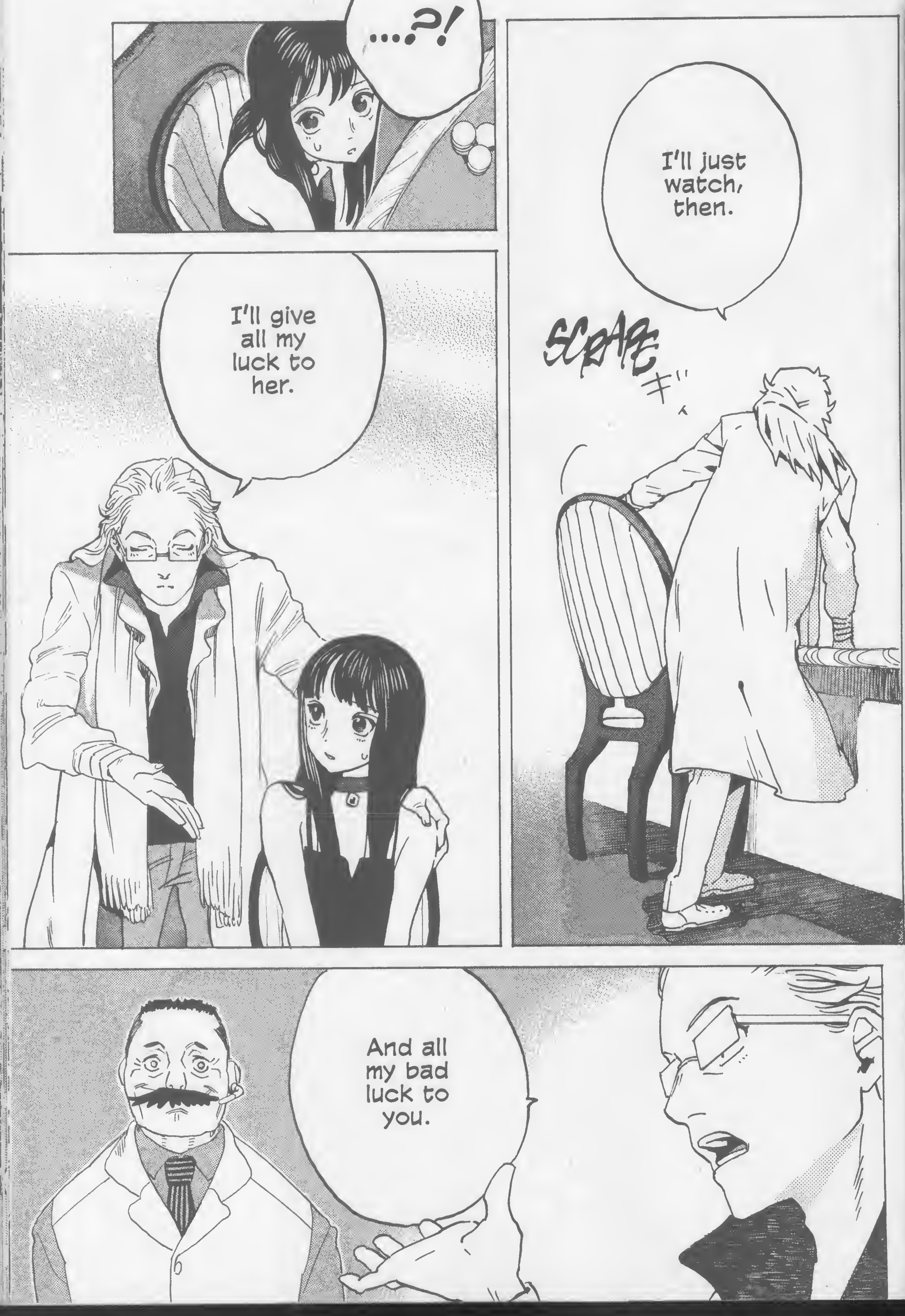

What are you planning, Balot?
We've been using Œufcoque's records to decide the best action...
FFSSSH
You can't win this battle with just your synthetic skin!
FFSSSH
FFSSSH
17.
17.

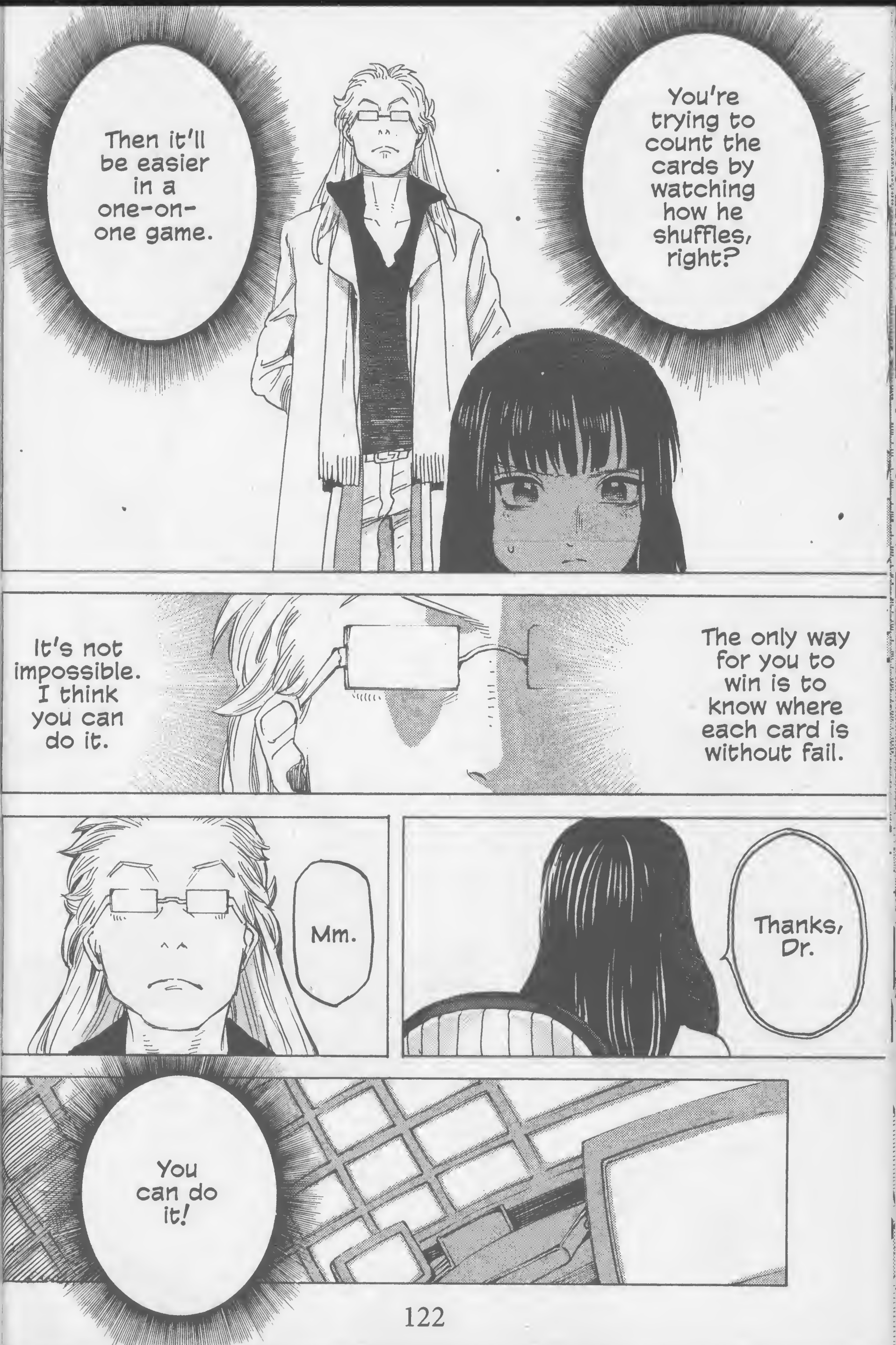

All three of us have 19.
See? Like that.
CHING
ガッ
SIGH
CLINK

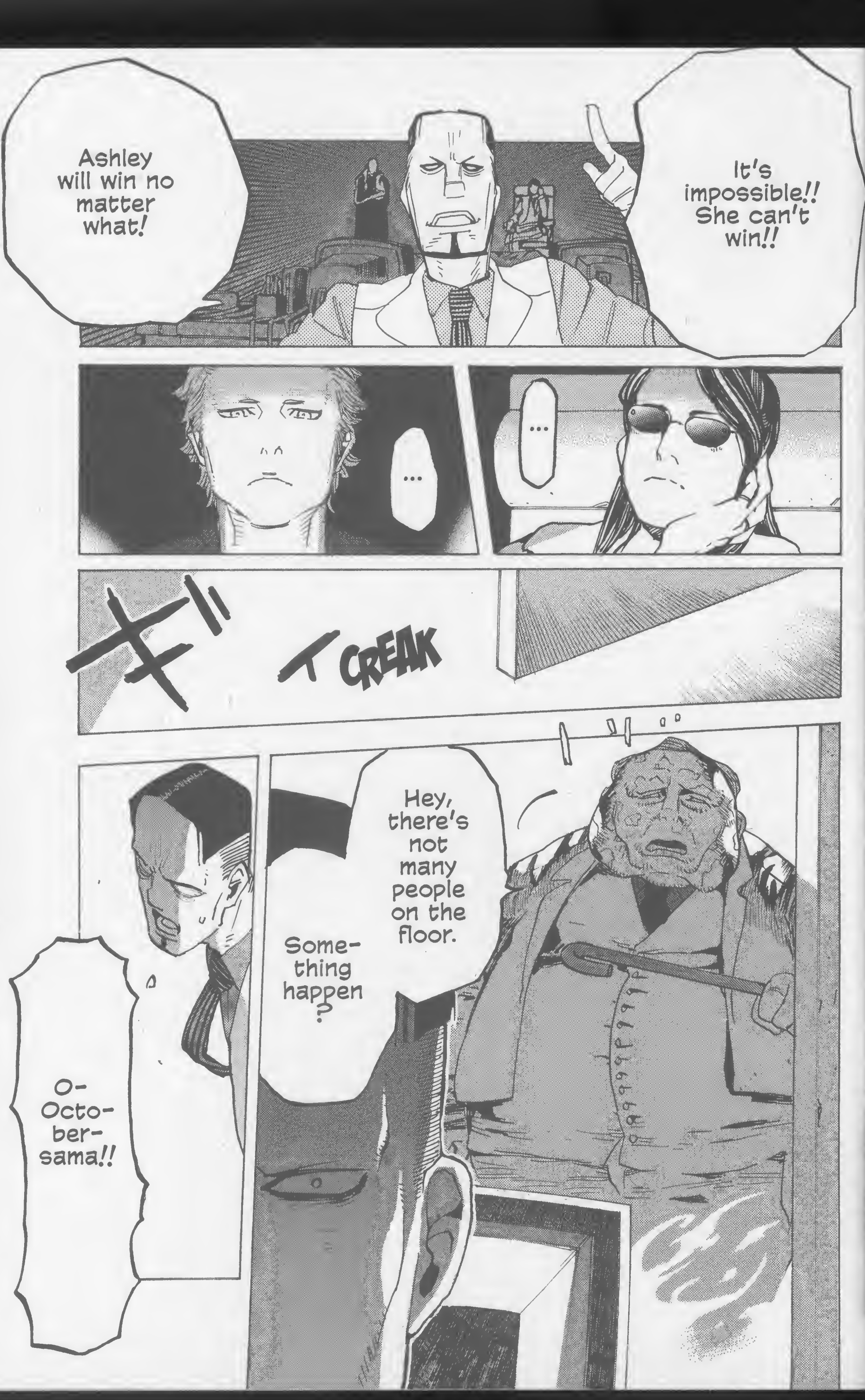

THUMP
My hand is a 20.
Dealer wins.
You gonna make us lose every time now?
CLINK
Guess so.
But maybe I'll throw in some draws so you don't give up.
THUD
THUD
SLIDE

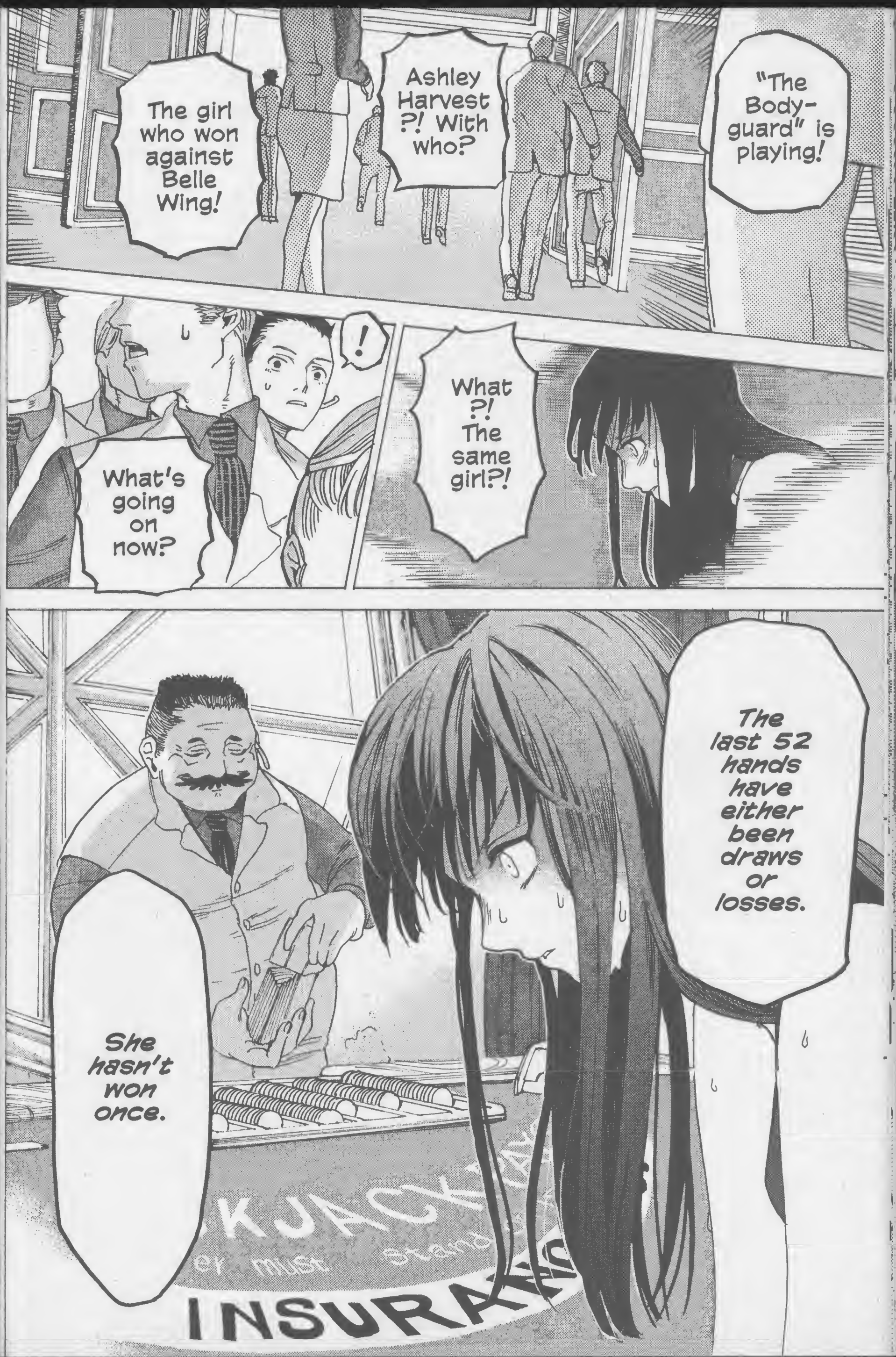

You're increasing your bet?!
...
...
SLIDE
B-Blackjack!!
Did you know what card was coming?!
SLIDE
Now for my second card.
Dealer also has blackjack.
Close, but still a draw.
SIGH

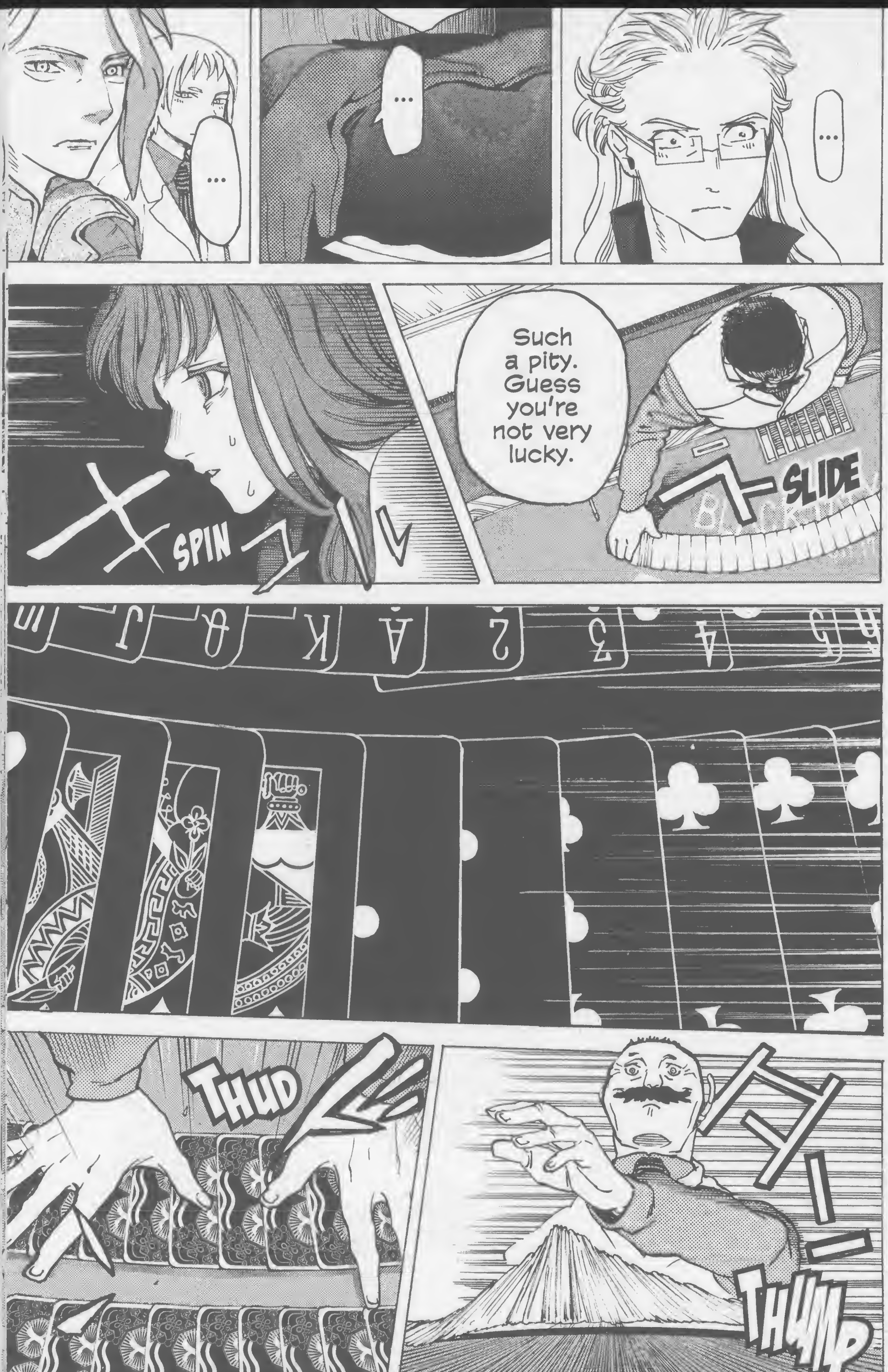

There was a better choice.
But you couldn't think of it.
Looks like you can predict your cards... but not mine.
...
I get it.

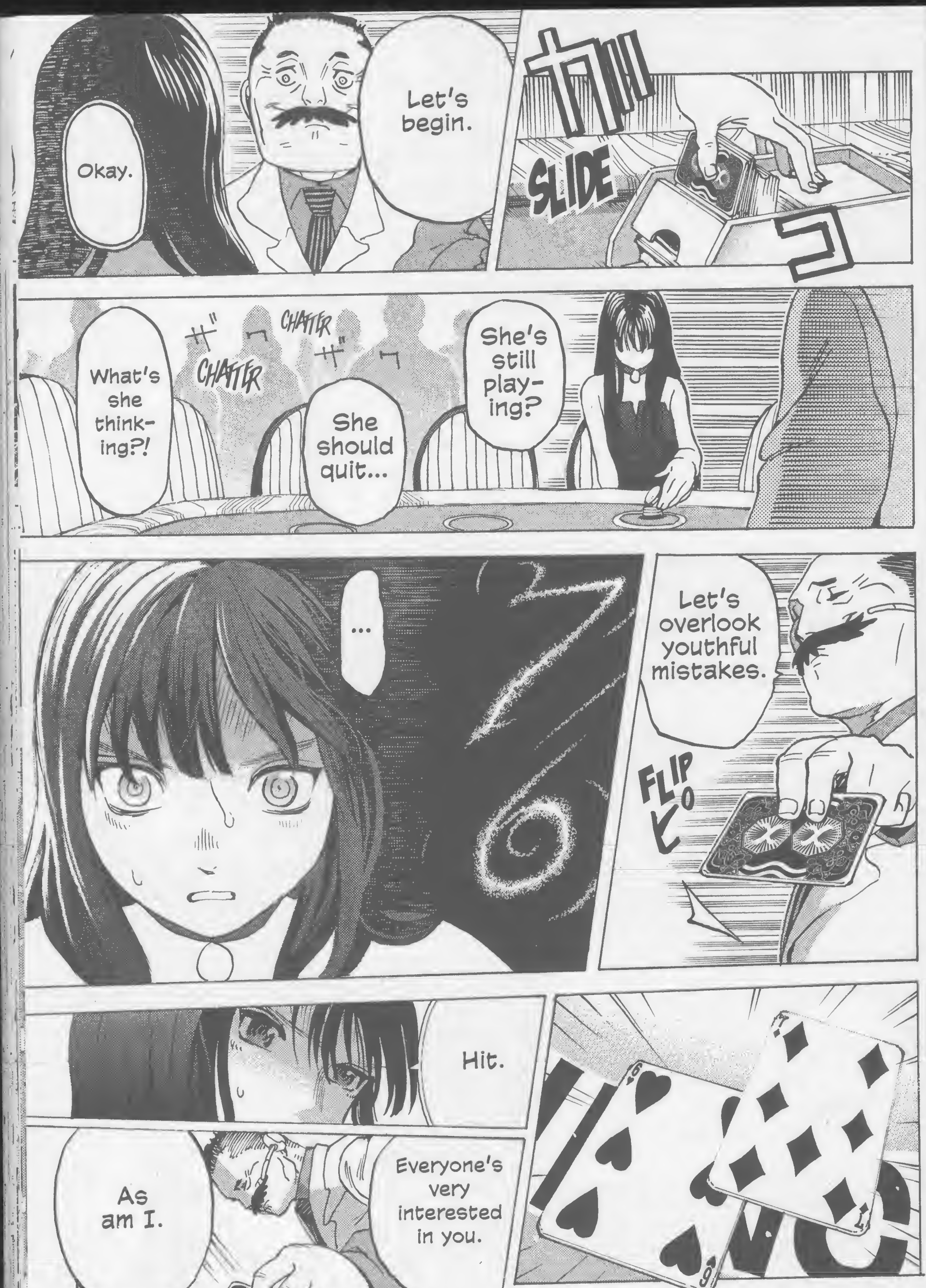

I'll just watch, then.
SCRAPE
ギ
...?!
I'll give all my luck to her.
And all my bad luck to you.

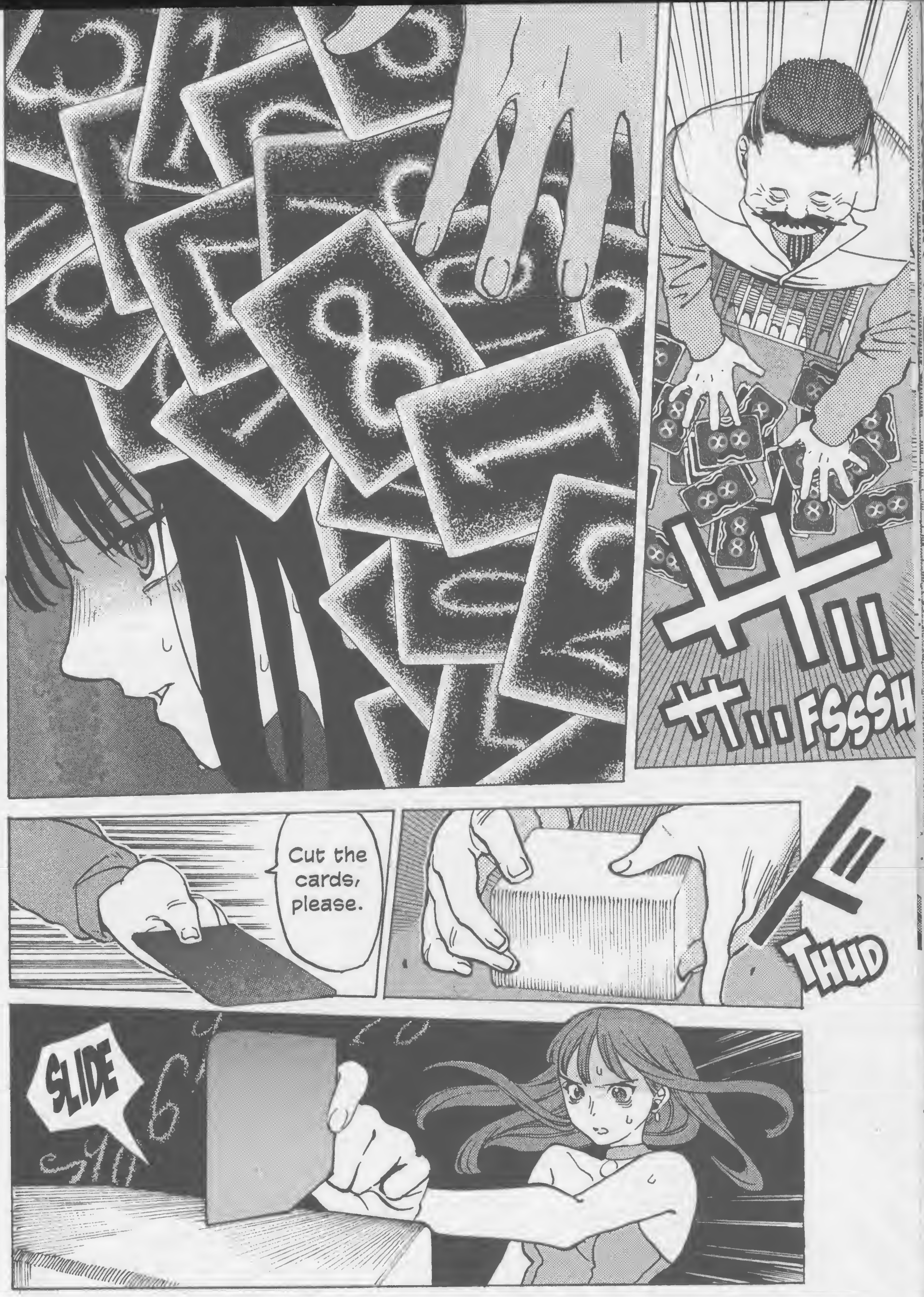

You're trying to count the cards by watching how he shuffles, right?
Then it'll be easier in a one-on-one game.
The only way for you to win is to know where each card is without fail.
It's not impossible. I think you can do it.
Thanks, Dr.
Mm.
You can do it!

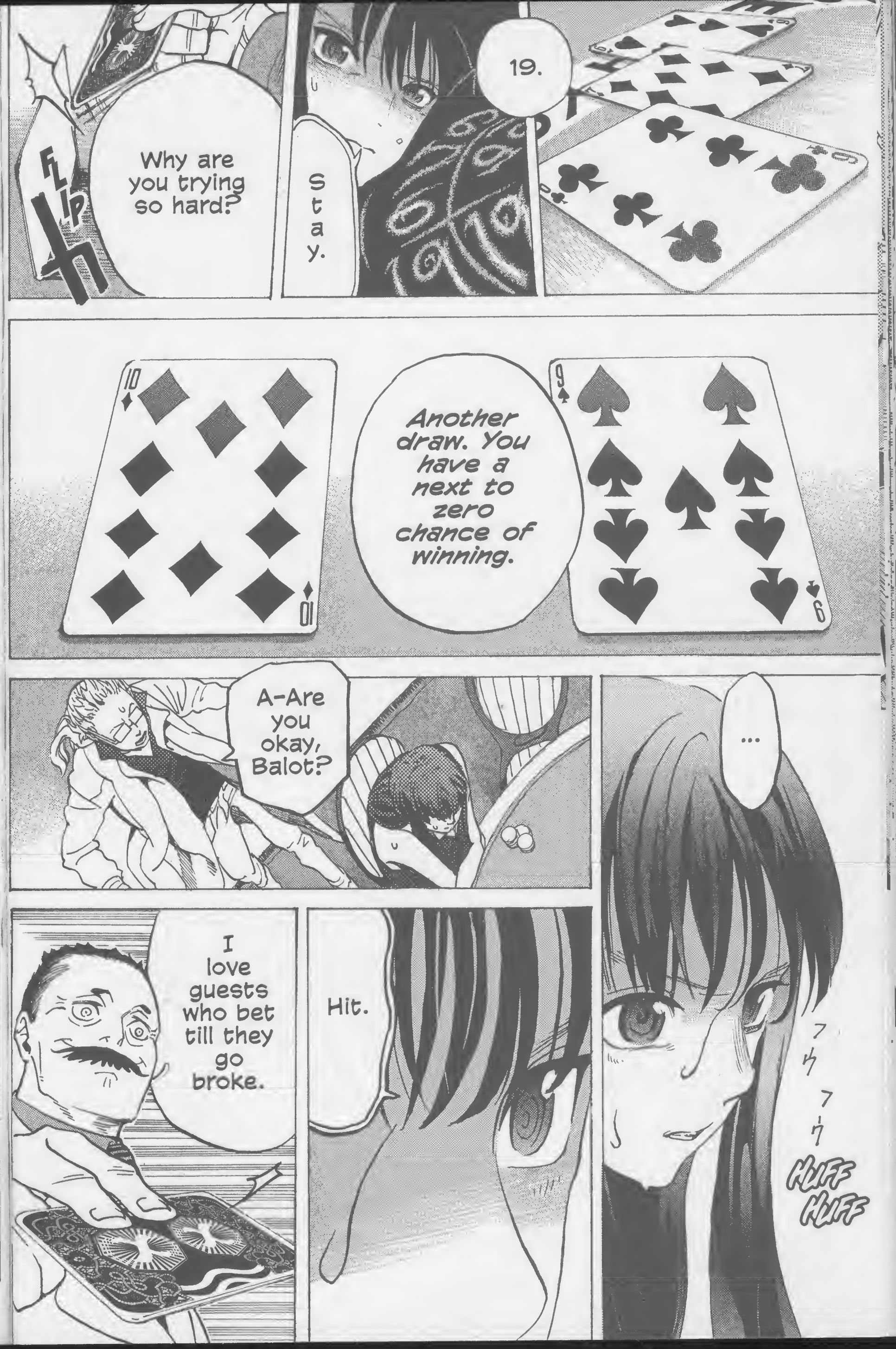

It's impossible!! She can't win!!
Ashley will win no matter what!
...
...
ギィ
CREAK
Hey, there's not many people on the floor.
Something happen?
O-October-sama!!

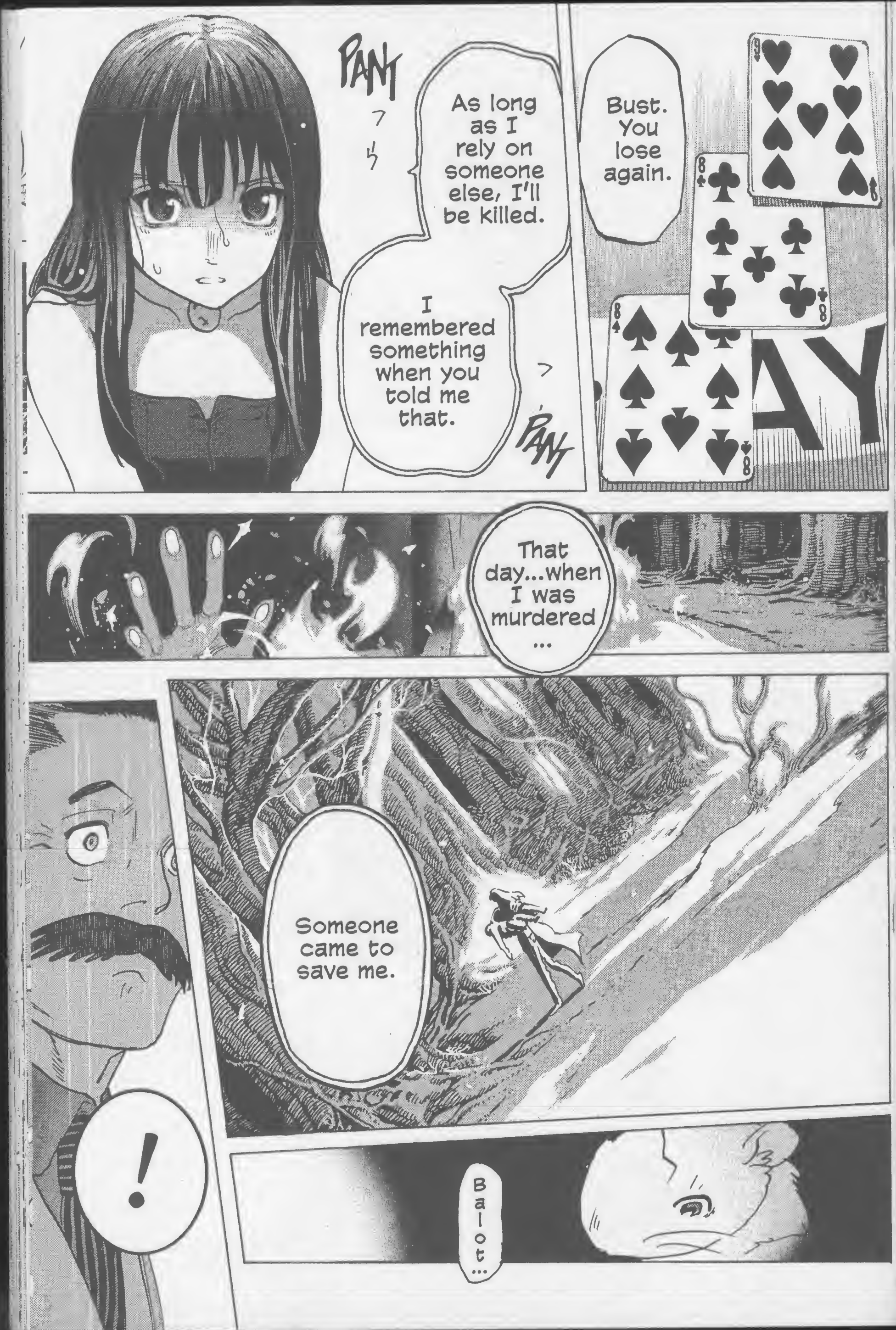

"The Bodyguard" is playing!
Ashley Harvest?! With who?
The girl who won against Belle Wing!
What?! The same girl?!
!
What's going on now?
The last 52 hands have either been draws or losses.
She hasn't won once.
INSURA

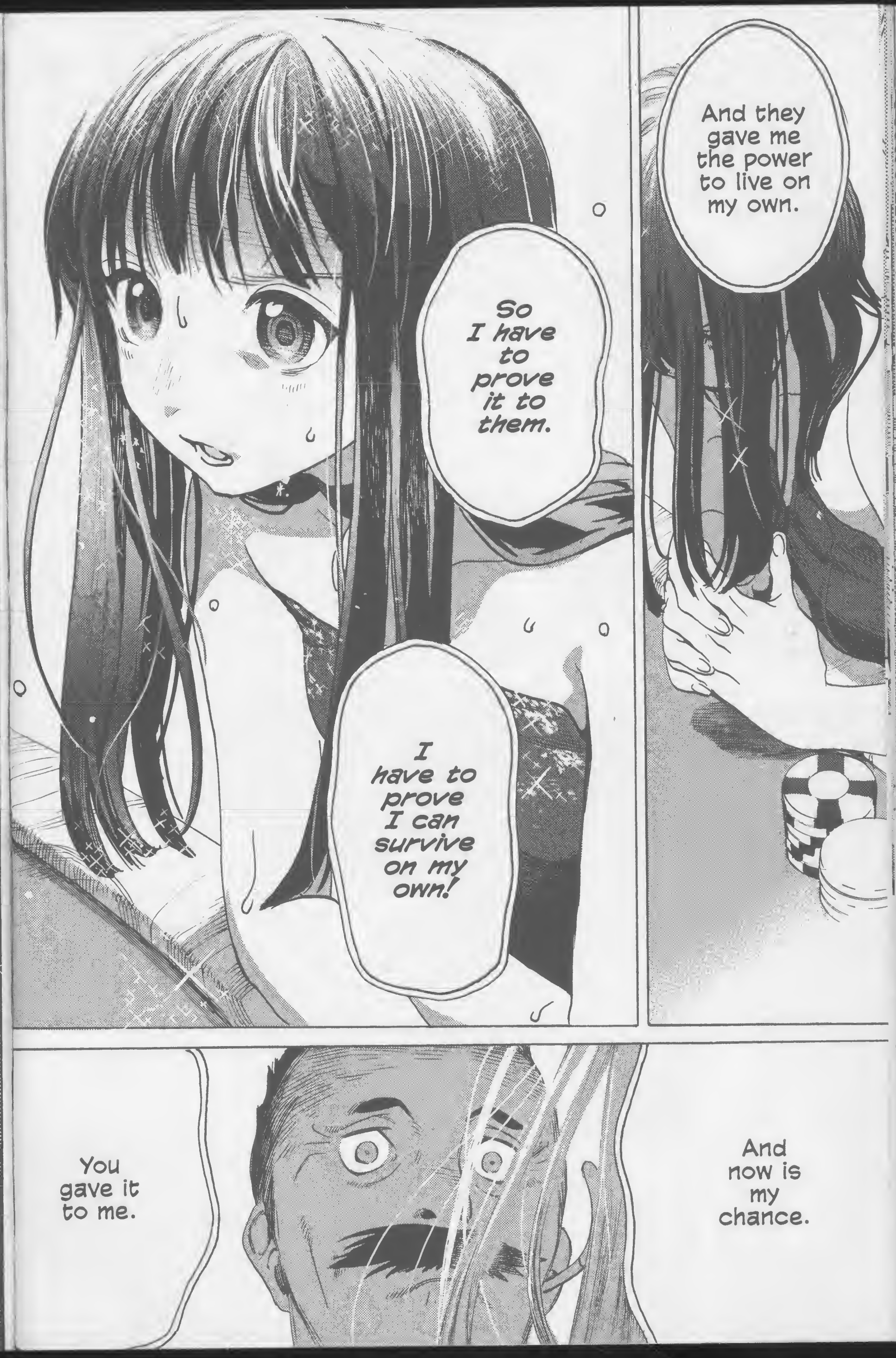

...
...
...
Such a pity. Guess you're not very lucky.
SLIDE
SPIN
THUMP
THUD

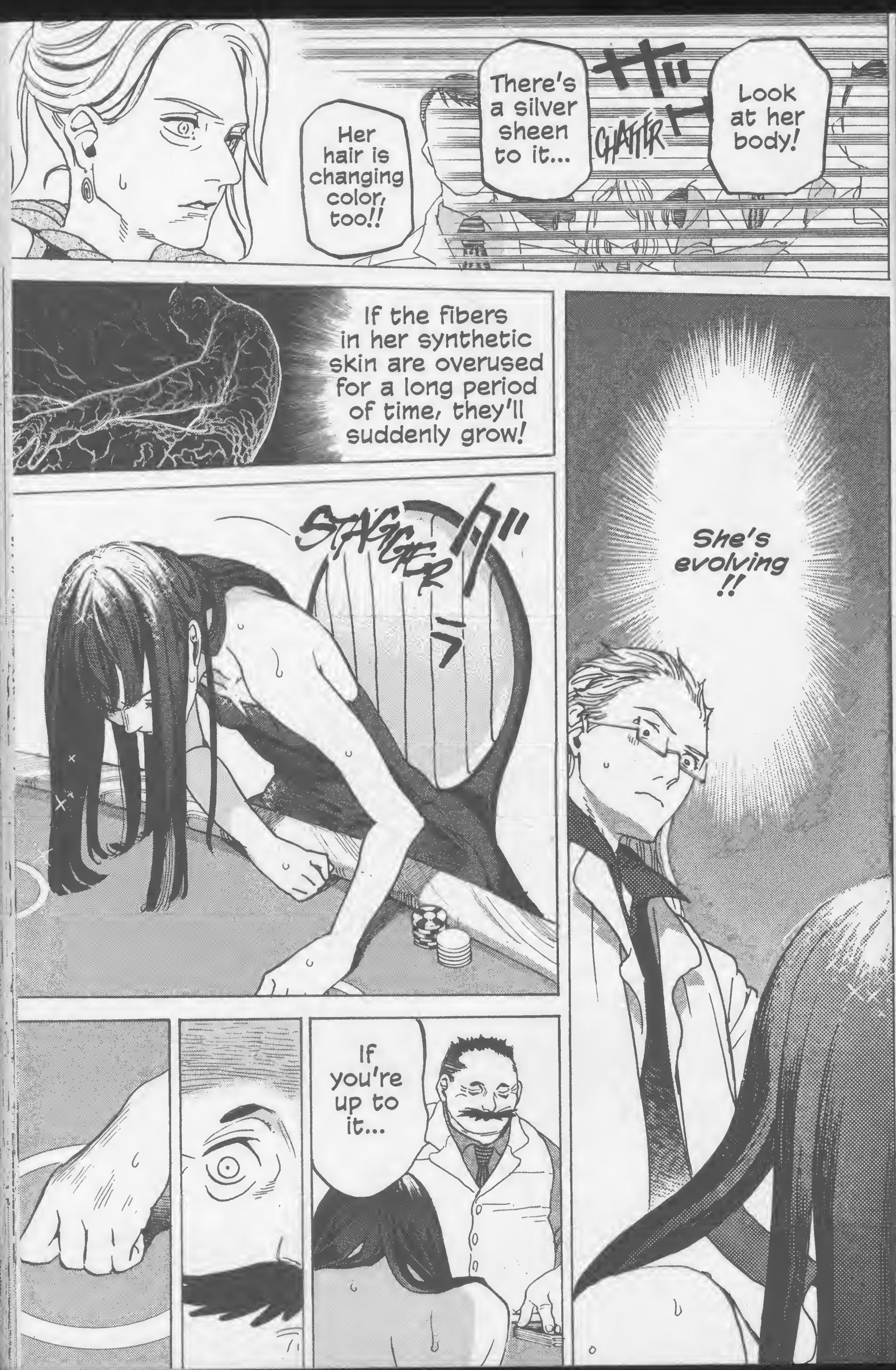

Let's begin.
Okay.
SLIDE
What's she thinking?!
CHATTER
CHATTER
She should quit...
She's still playing?
...
Let's overlook youthful mistakes.
FLIP
Hit.
Everyone's very interested in you.
As am I.

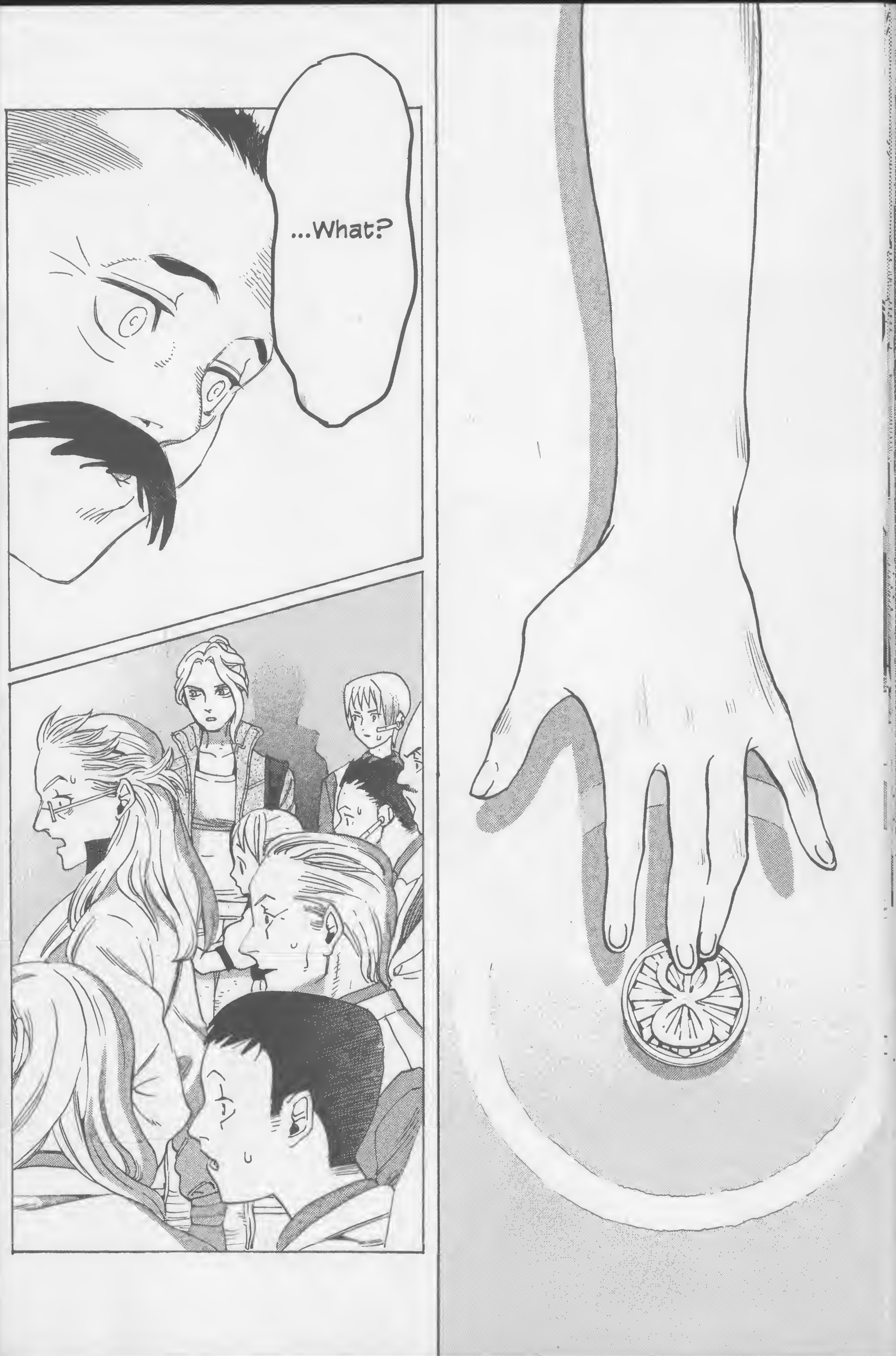

FSSSH
Cut the cards, please.
THUD
SLIDE

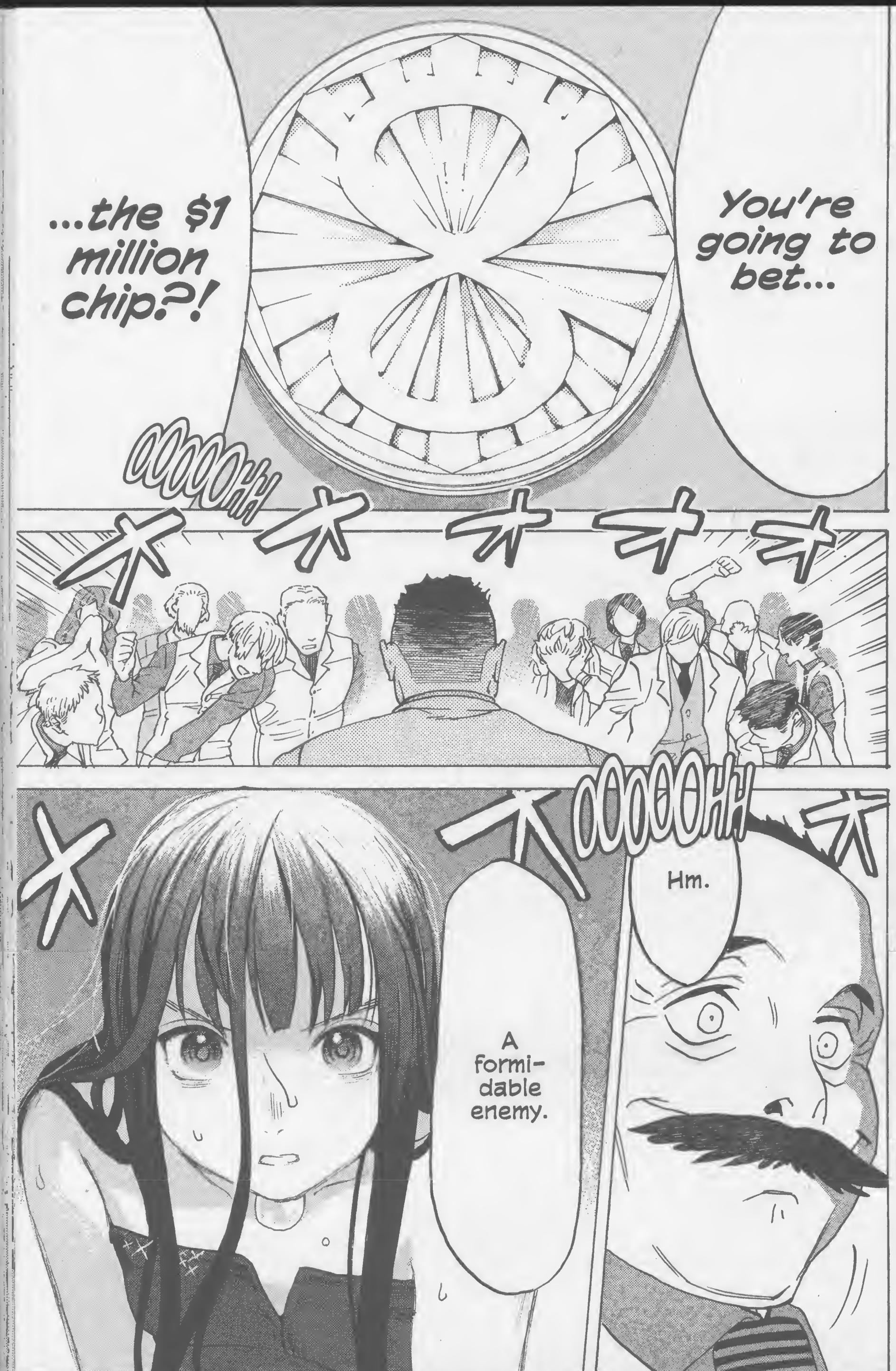

19.
Stay.
FLIP
Why are you trying so hard?
Another draw. You have a next to zero chance of winning.
...
A-Are you okay, Balot?
フッ フッ
HUFF HUFF
Hit.
I love guests who bet till they go broke.

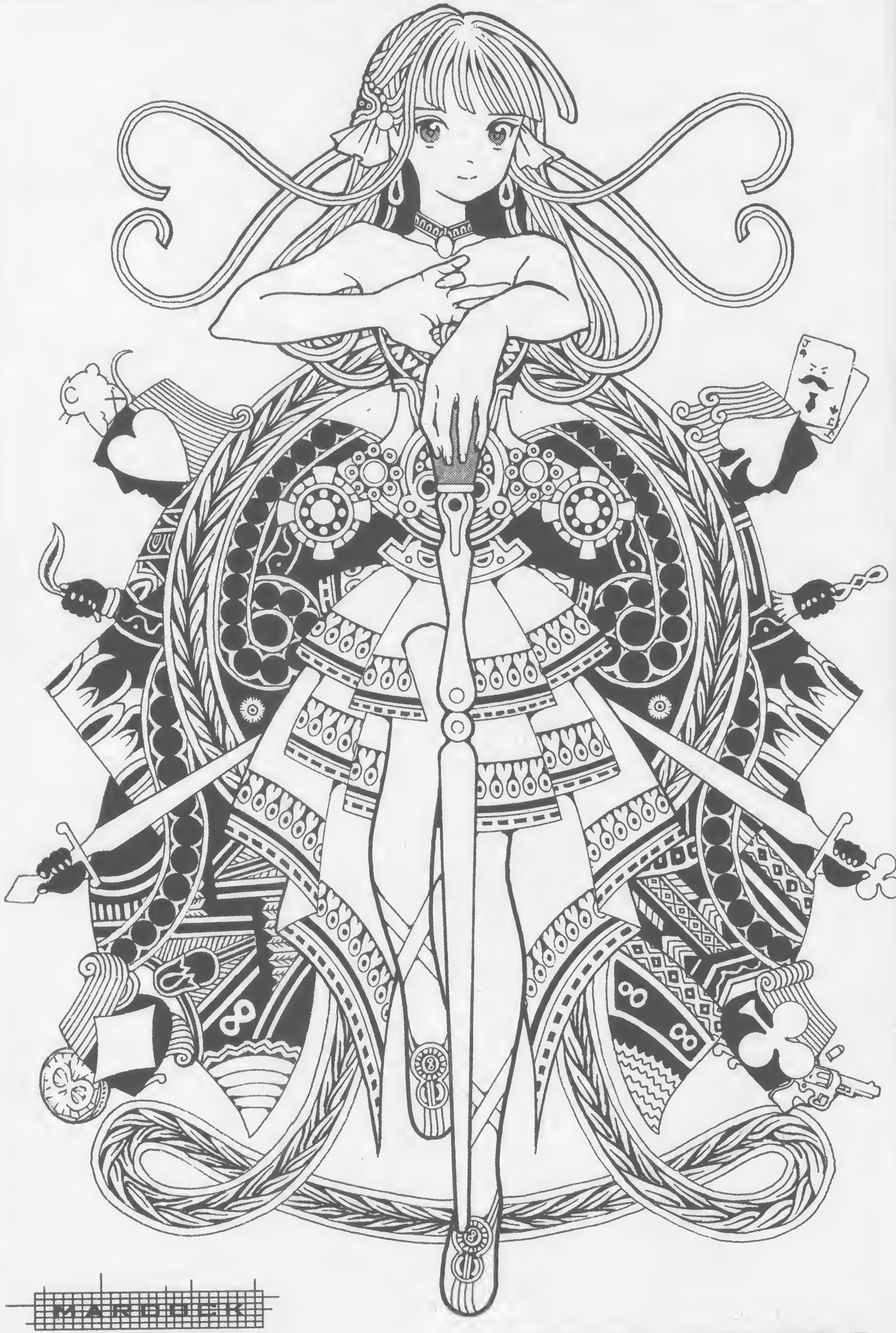

Bust. You lose again.
AY
PANT
フッ
As long as I rely on someone else, I'll be killed.
I remembered something when you told me that.
フッ
PANT
That day...when I was murdered ...
Someone came to save me.
!
Balot...


And they gave me the power to live on my own.
So I have to prove it to them.
I have to prove I can survive on my own!
And now is my chance.
You gave it to me.


Look at her body!
CHATTER
There's a silver sheen to it...
Her hair is changing color, too!!
She's evolving!!
If the fibers in her synthetic skin are overused for a long period of time, they'll suddenly grow!
STAGGER
If you're up to it...


...What?

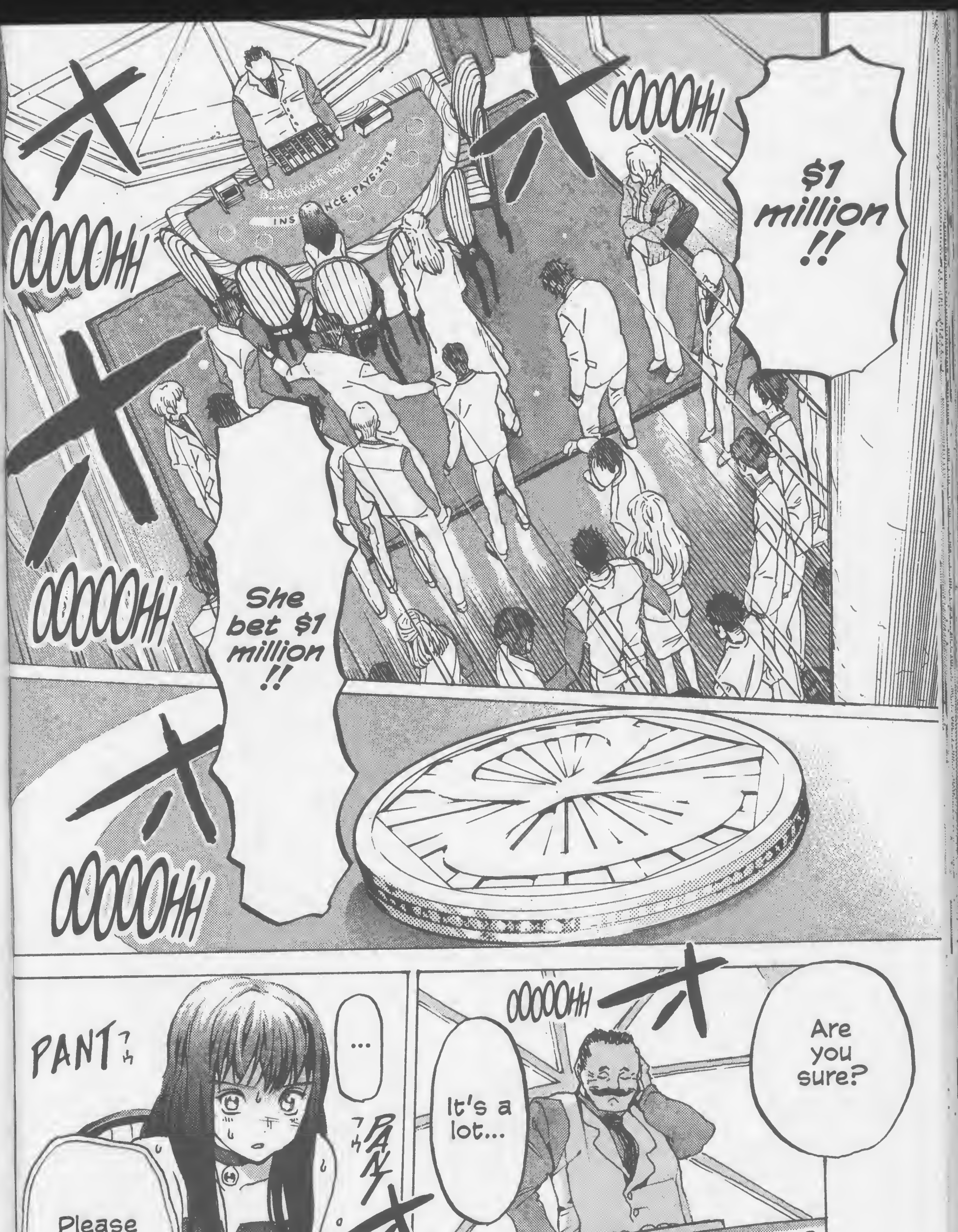

You're going to bet...
...the $1 million chip?!
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
Hm.
A formi-dable enemy.

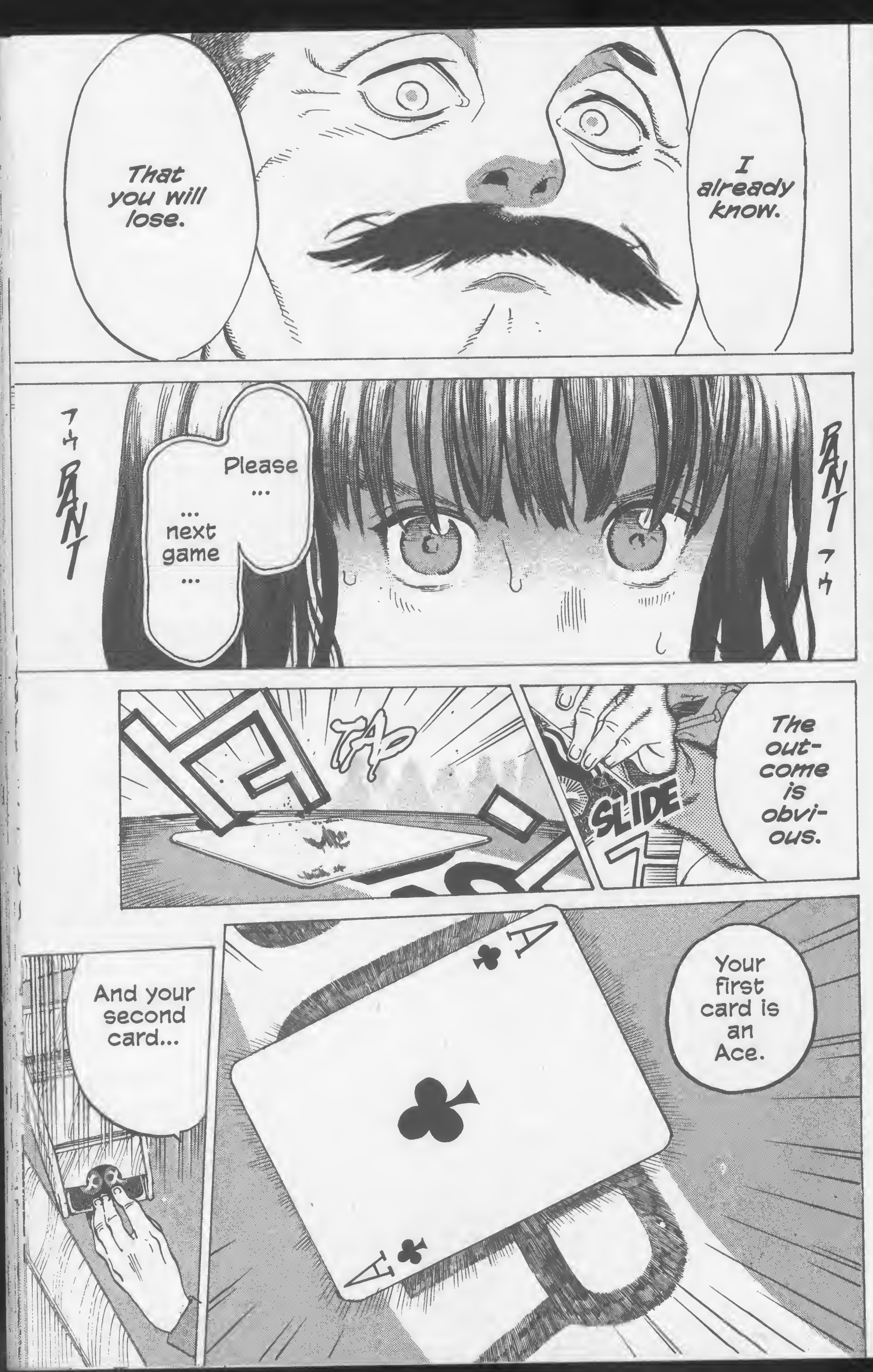


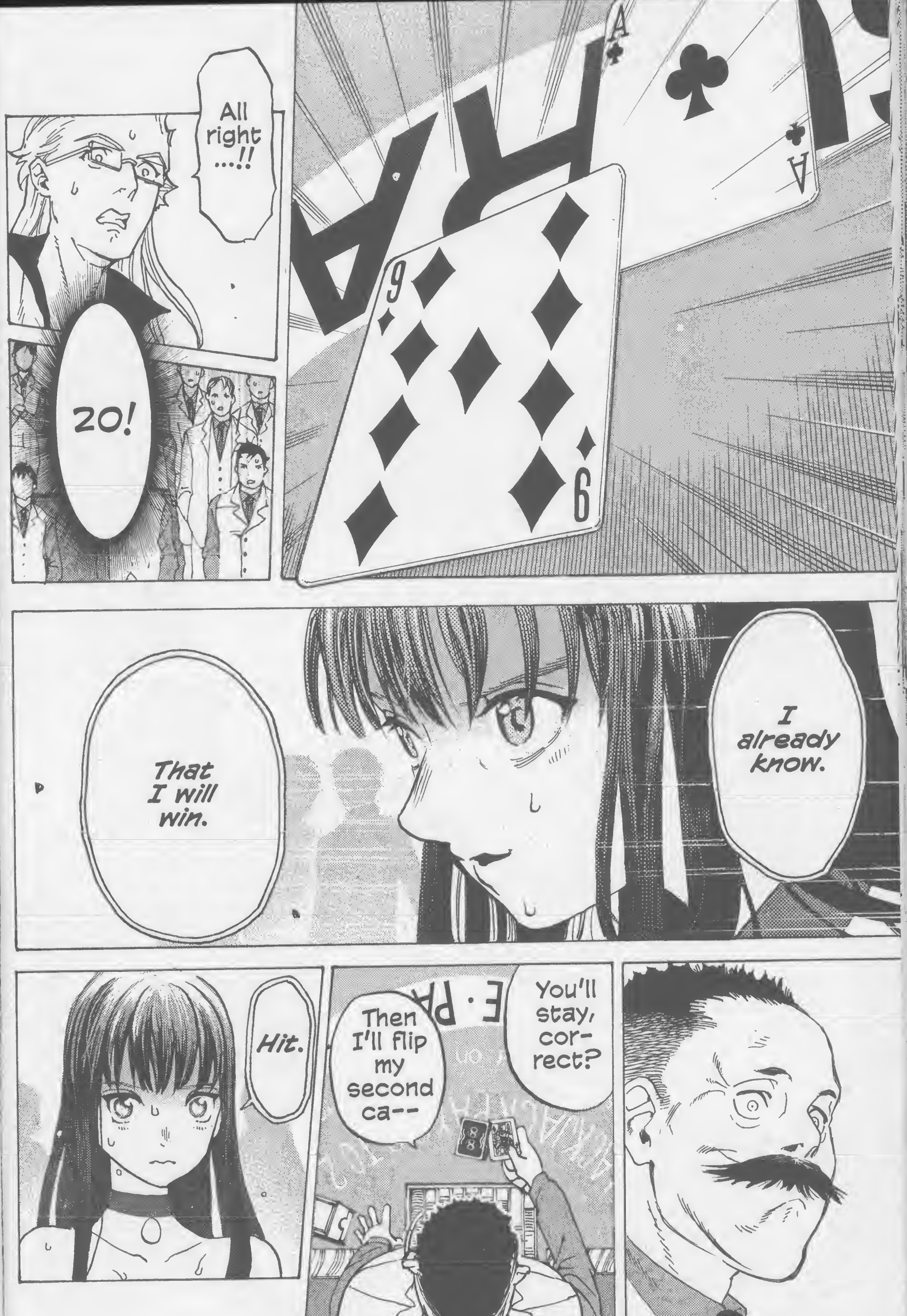
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

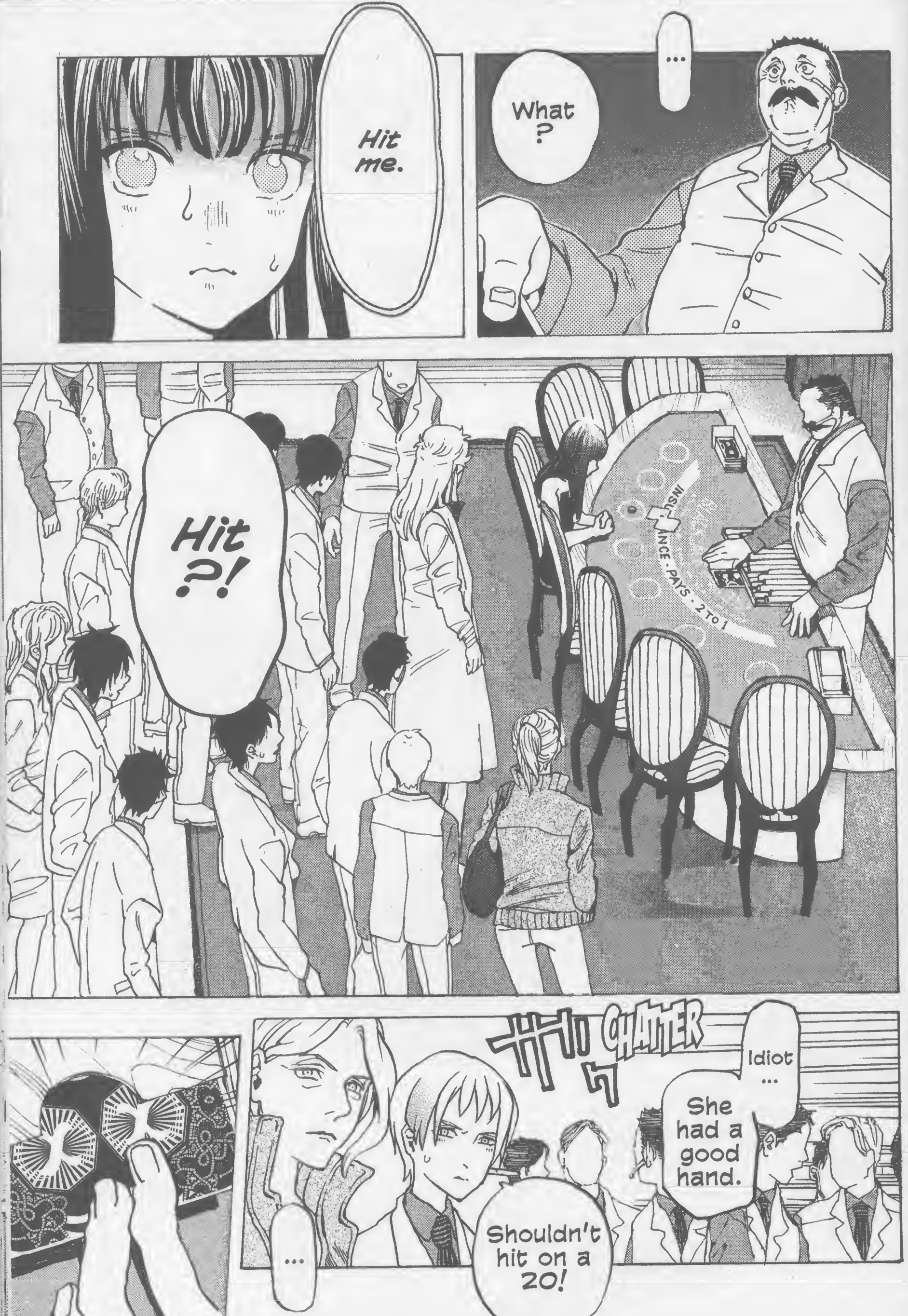
Chapter 25: Manifold (3)

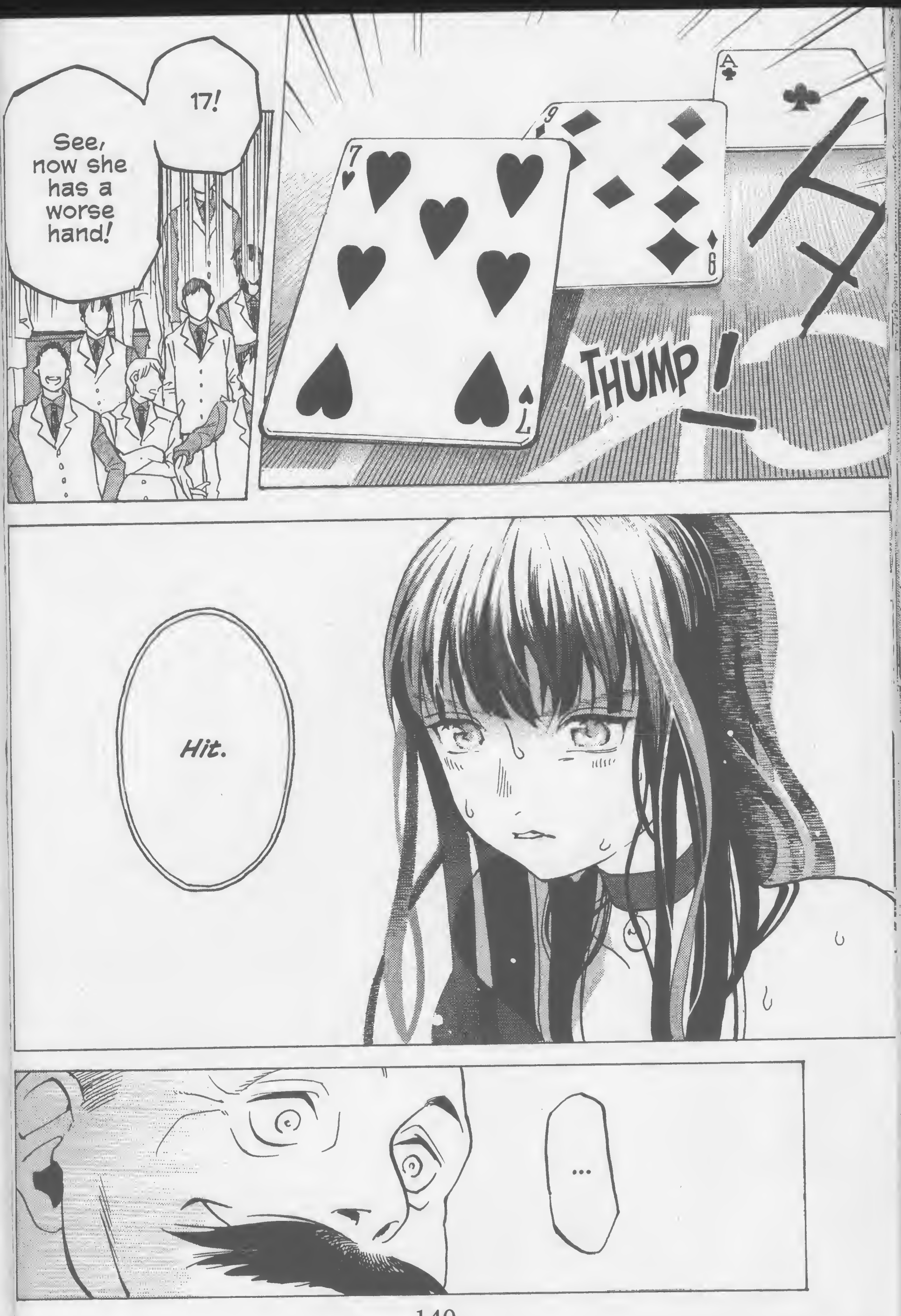
MARDOCK SCRAMBLE

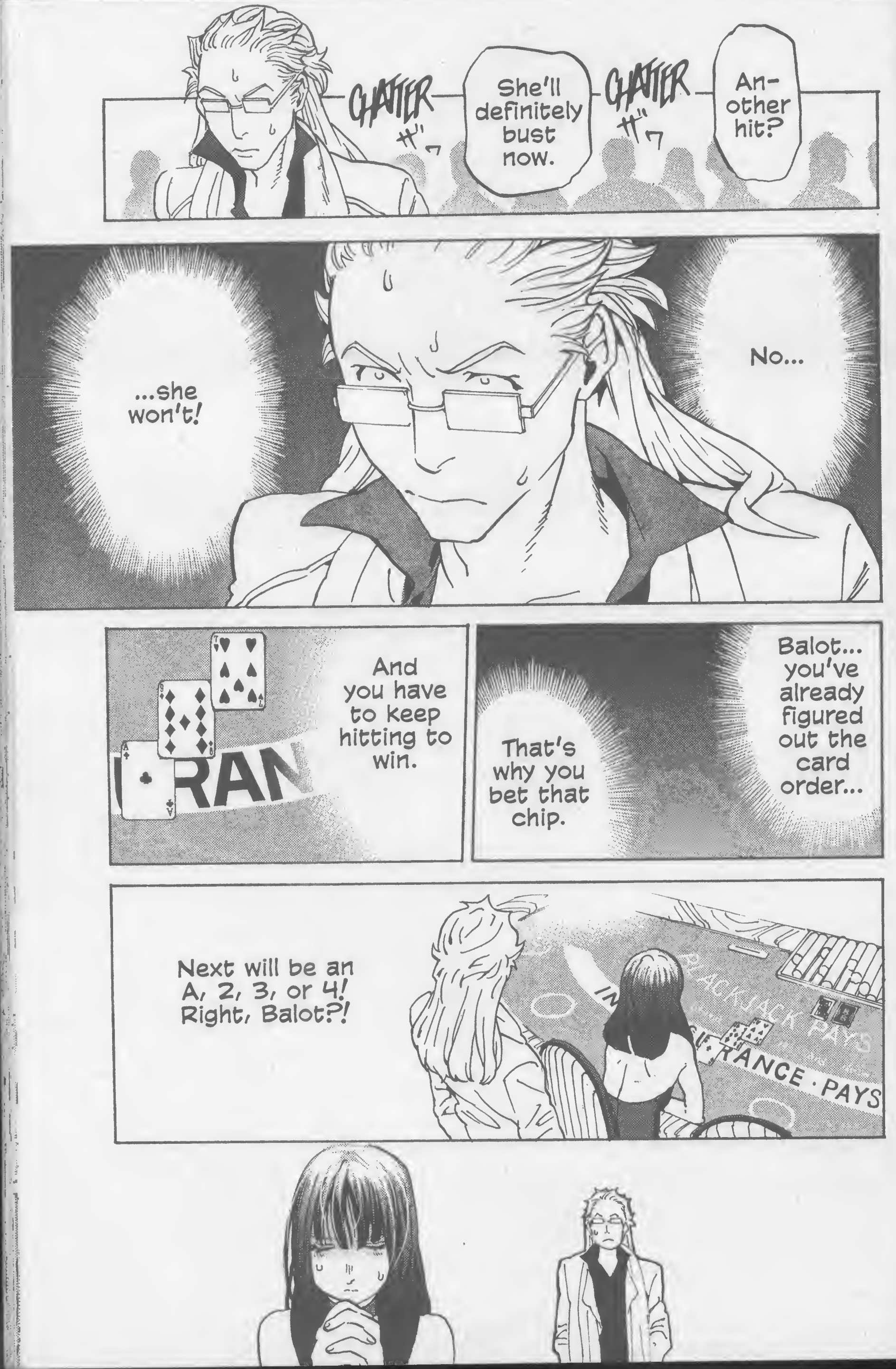

$1 million!!
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
She bet $1 million!!
OOOOOHH
Are you sure?
OOOOOHH
It's a lot...
OOOOOHH
PANT
...
PANT
Please start the game.

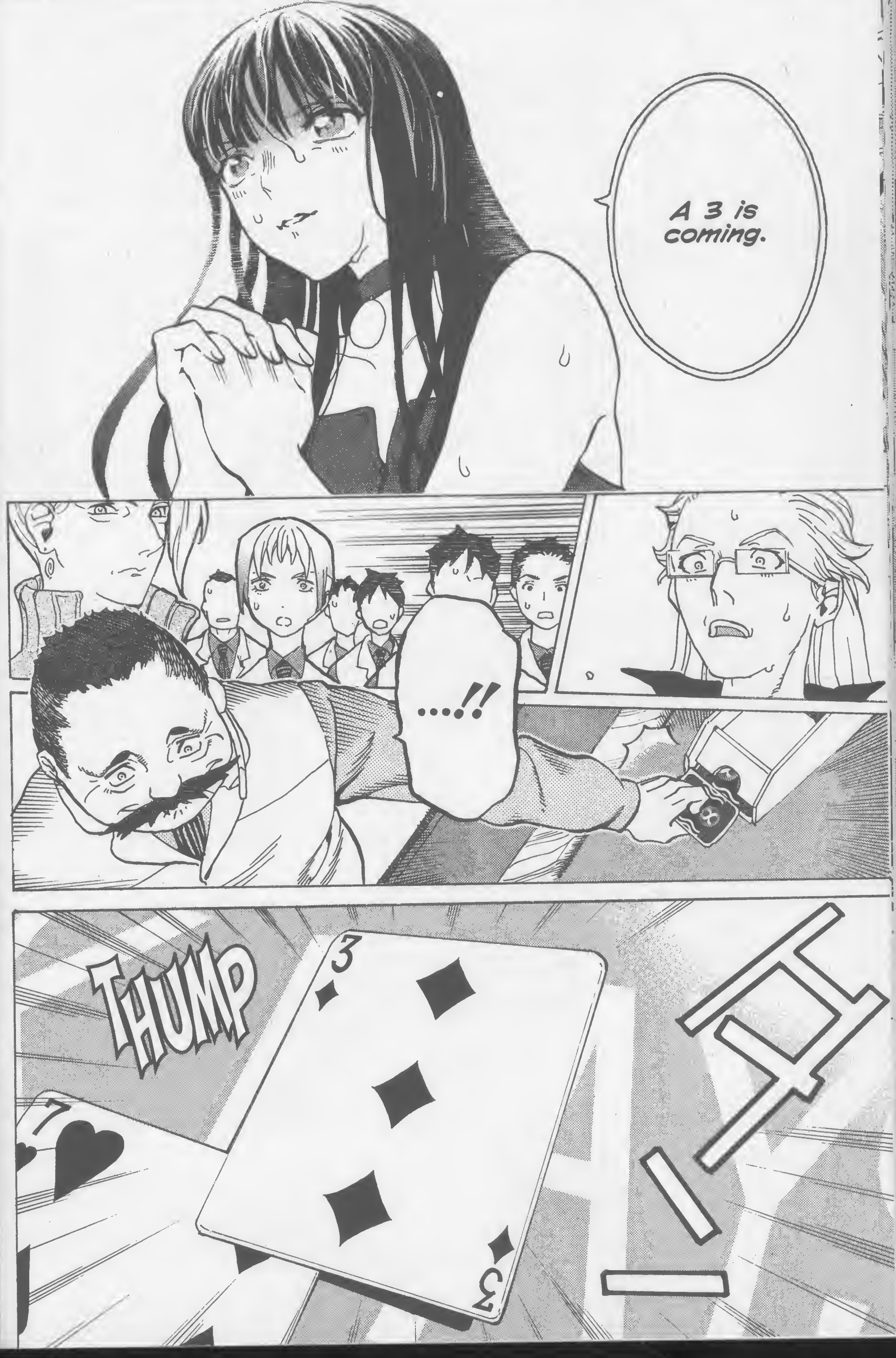

I already know.
That you will lose.
PANT
Please ...
... next game ...
PANT
The outcome is obvious.
SLIDE
TAP
Your first card is an Ace.
And your second card...

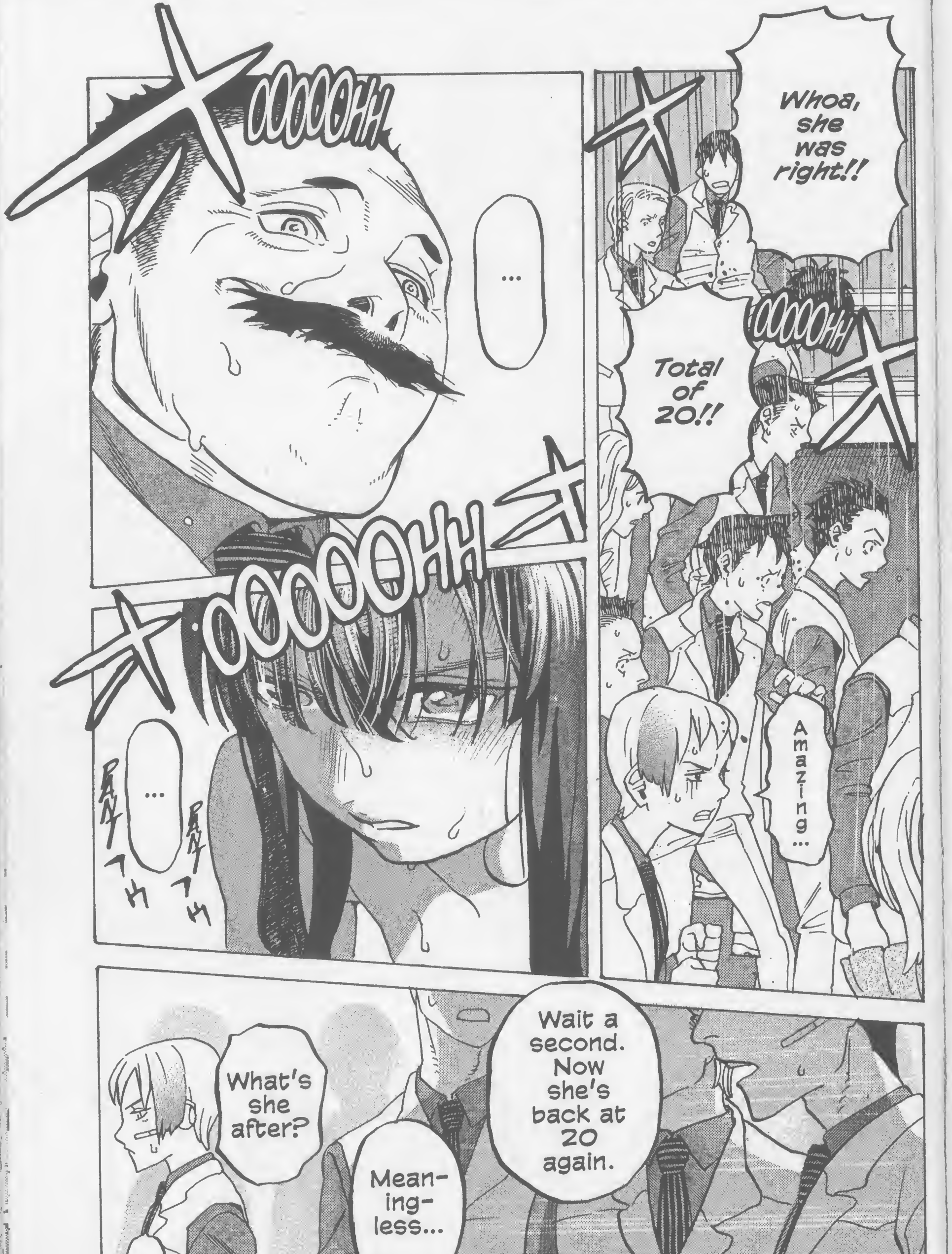

All right ...!!
20!
I already know.
That I will win.
You'll stay, correct?
Then I'll flip my second ca--
Hit.

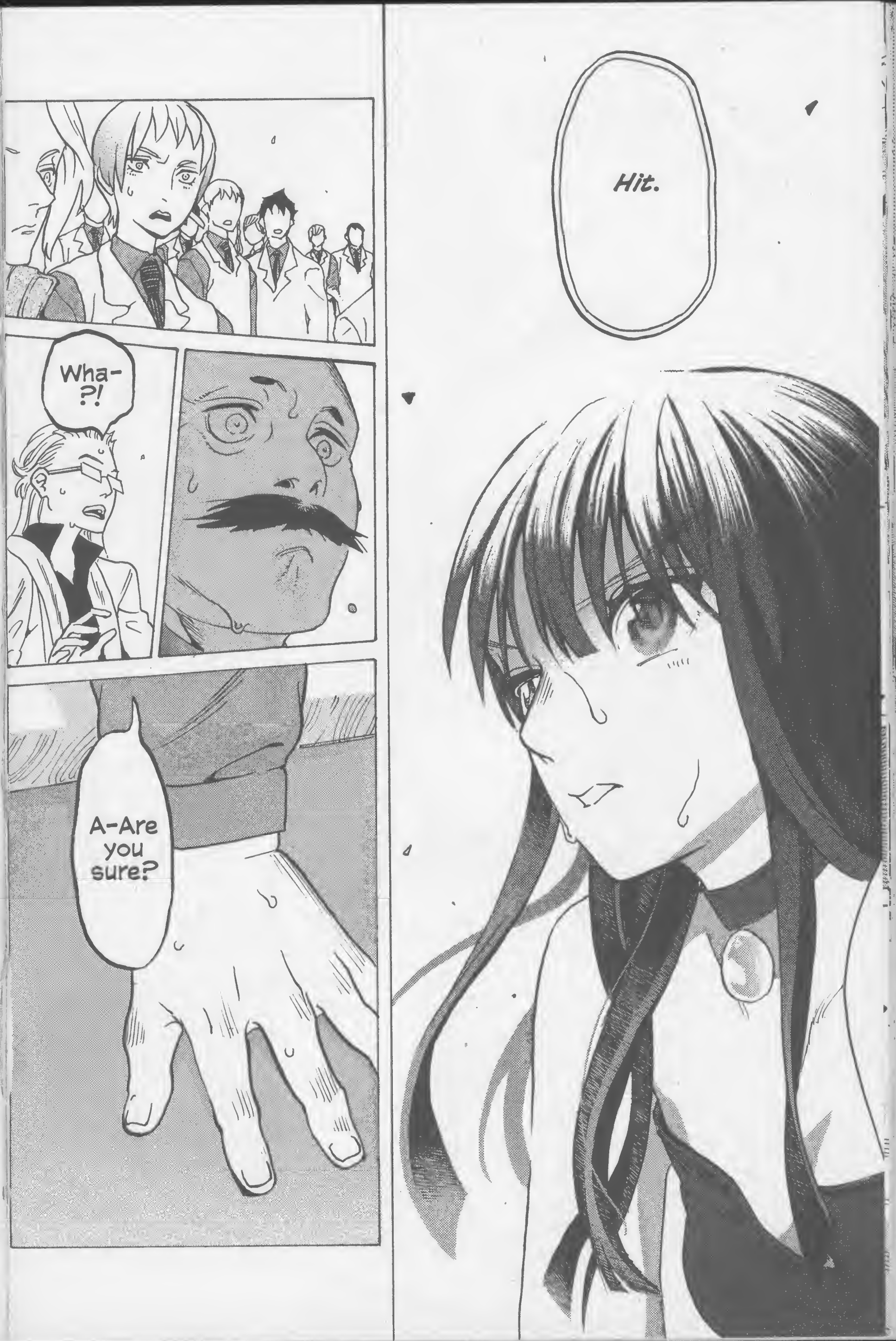

...
What?
Hit me.
Hit?!
Idiot ...
She had a good hand.
CHATTER
Shouldn't hit on a 20!
...

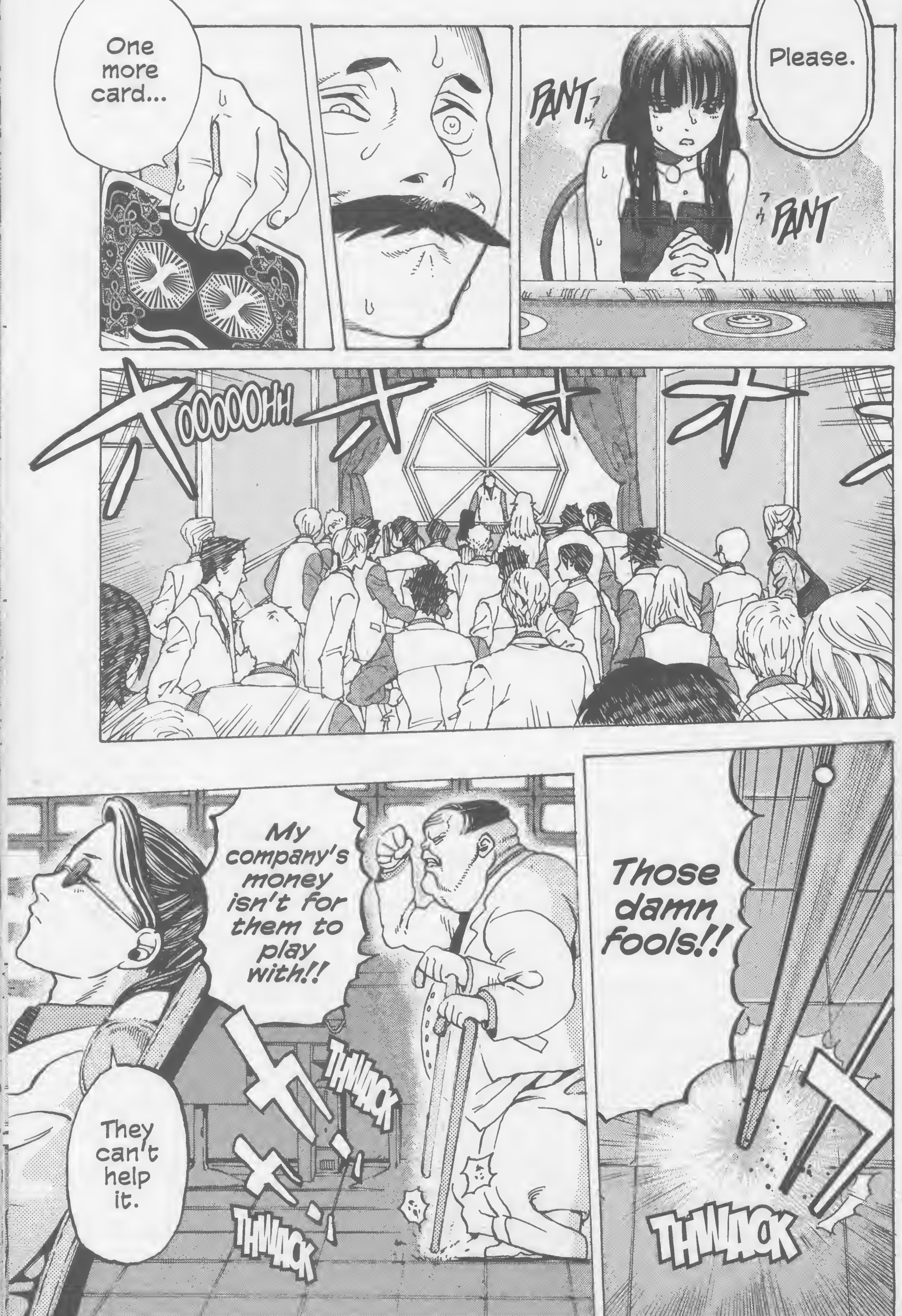

17!
See, now she has a worse hand!
THUMP!
Hit.
...

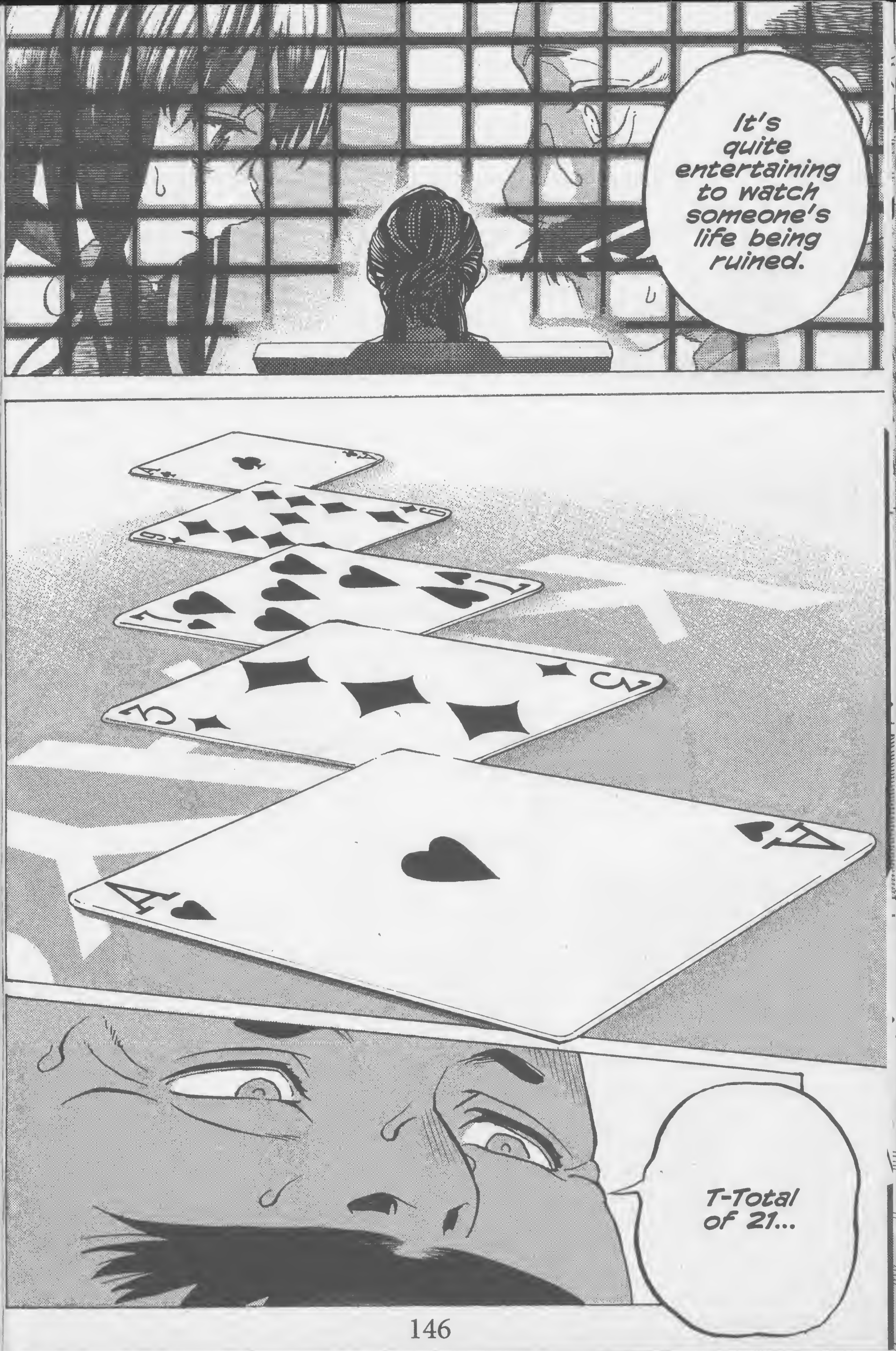

An-other hit?
CHATTER
She'll definitely bust now.
CHATTER
No...
...she won't!
Balot... you've already figured out the card order...
That's why you bet that chip.
And you have to keep hitting to win.
Next will be an A, 2, 3, or 4! Right, Balot?!

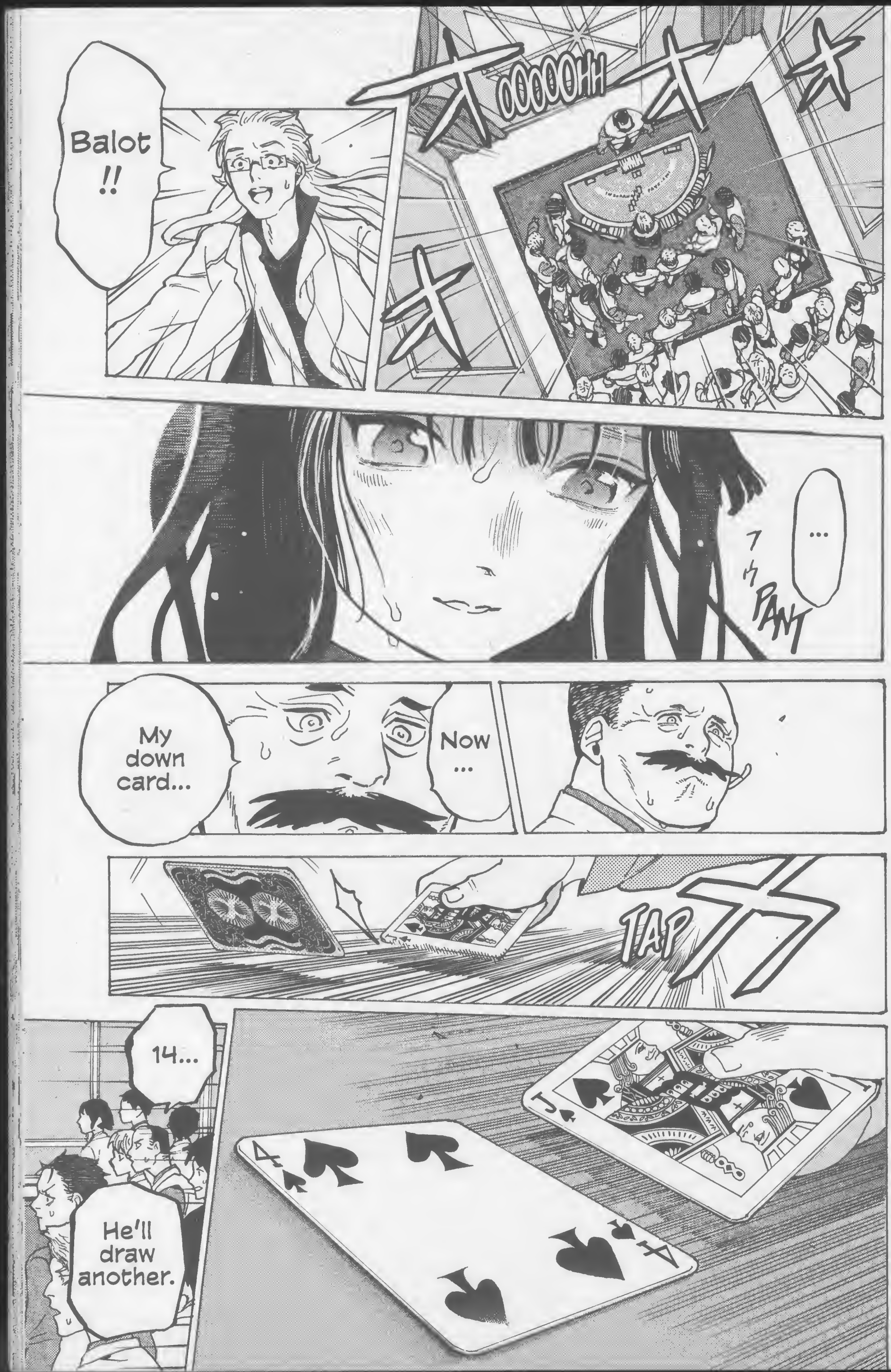

A 3 is coming.
...!!
THUMP

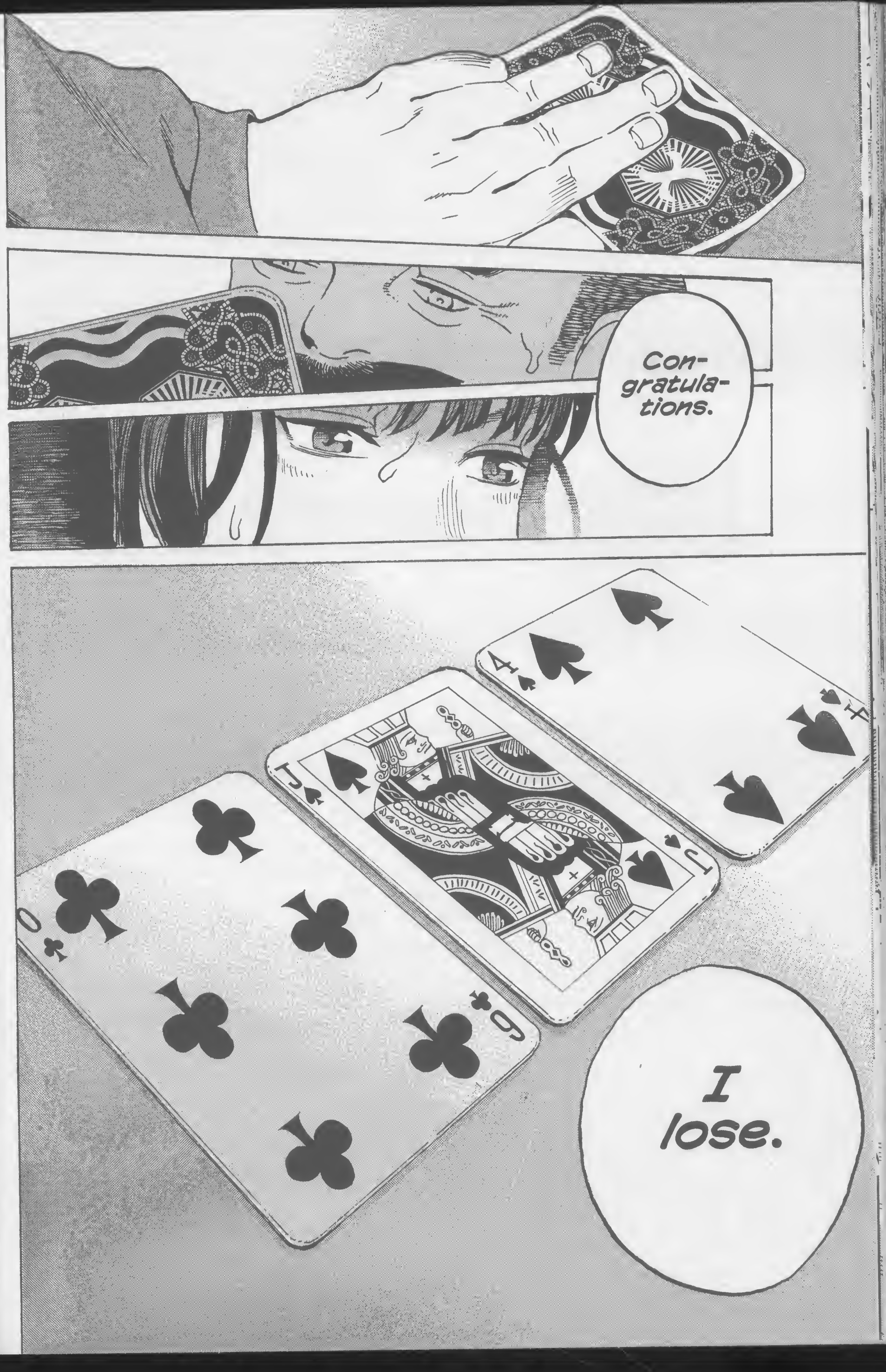

Whoa, she was right!!
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
Total of 20!!
...
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
...
Amazing...
Wait a second. Now she's back at 20 again.
What's she after?
Meaning-less...
...

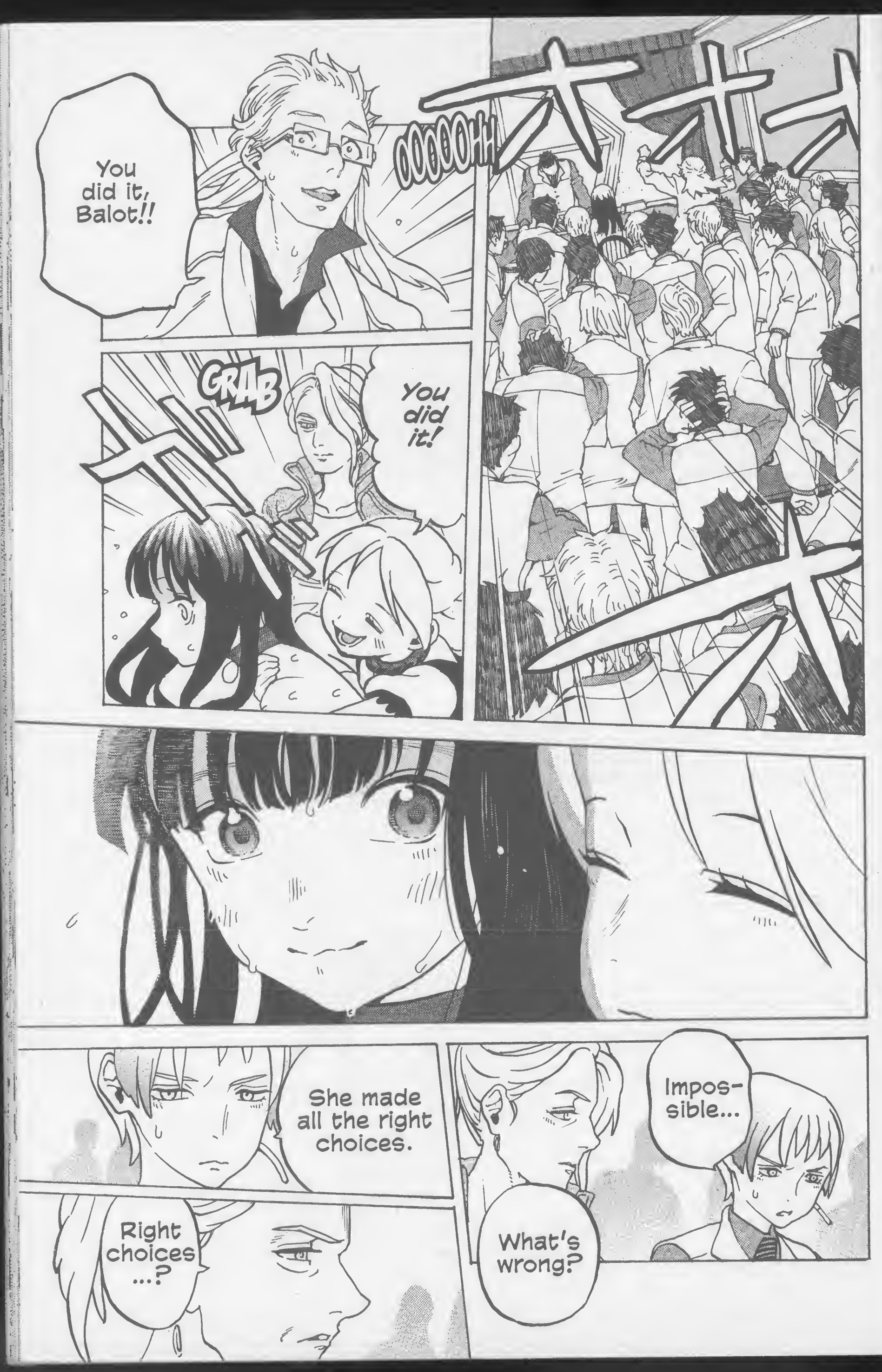

Hit.
Wha-?!
A-Are you sure?

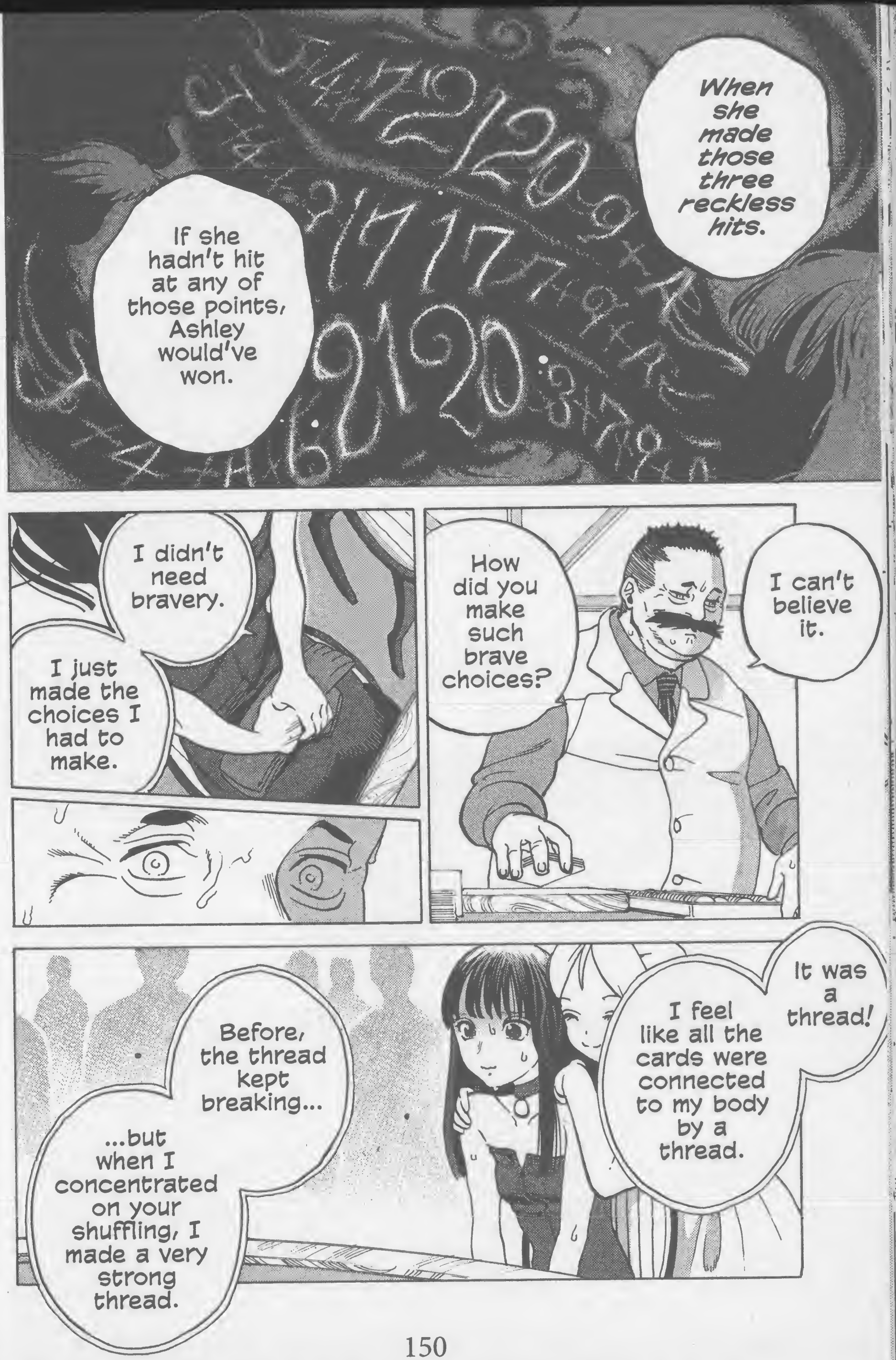

Please.
PANT
PANT
One more card...
OOOOOHH
Those damn fools!!
THWACK
My company's money isn't for them to play with!!
THWACK
THWACK
They can't help it.

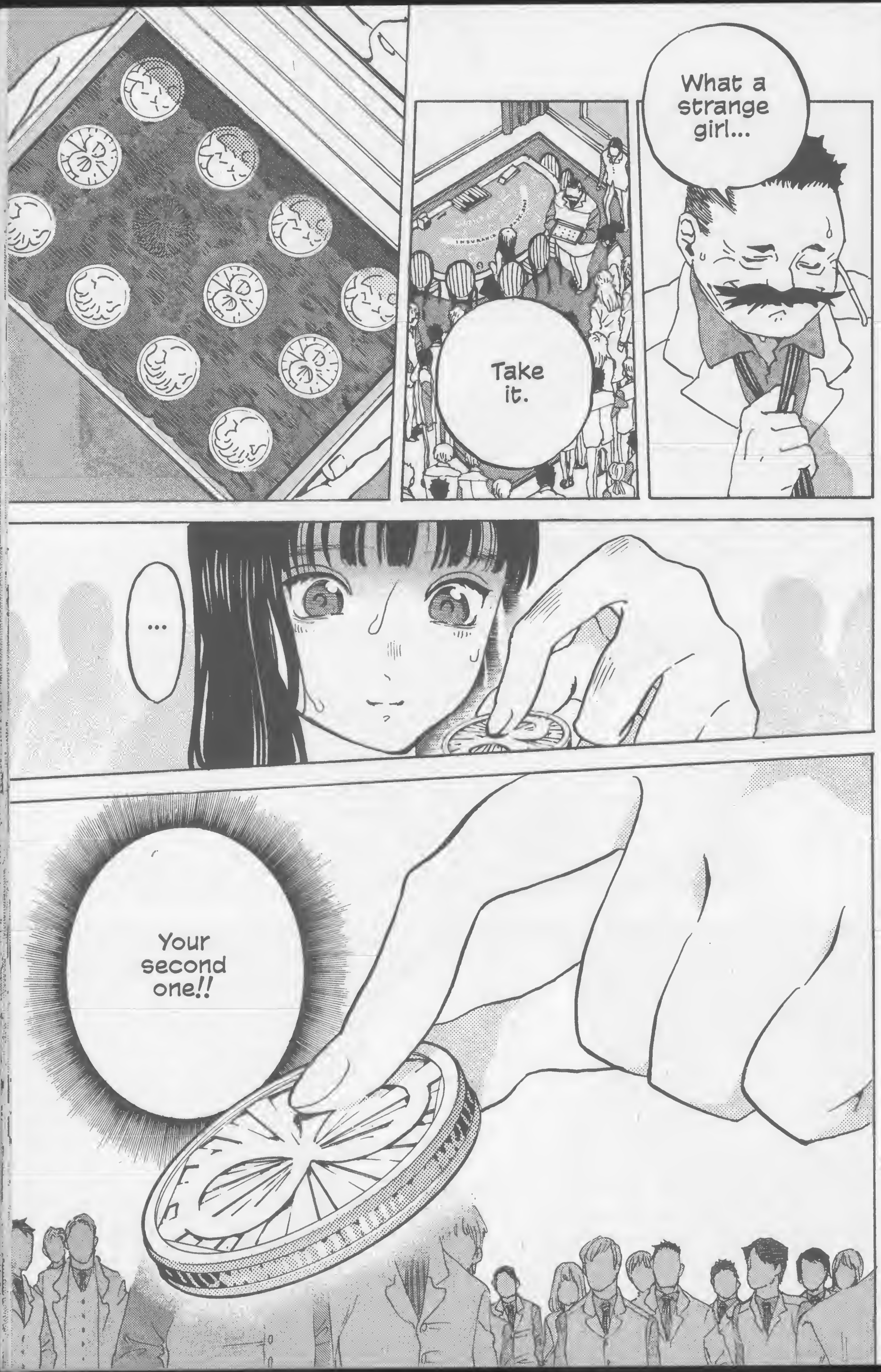

It's quite entertaining to watch someone's life being ruined.
T-Total of 21...

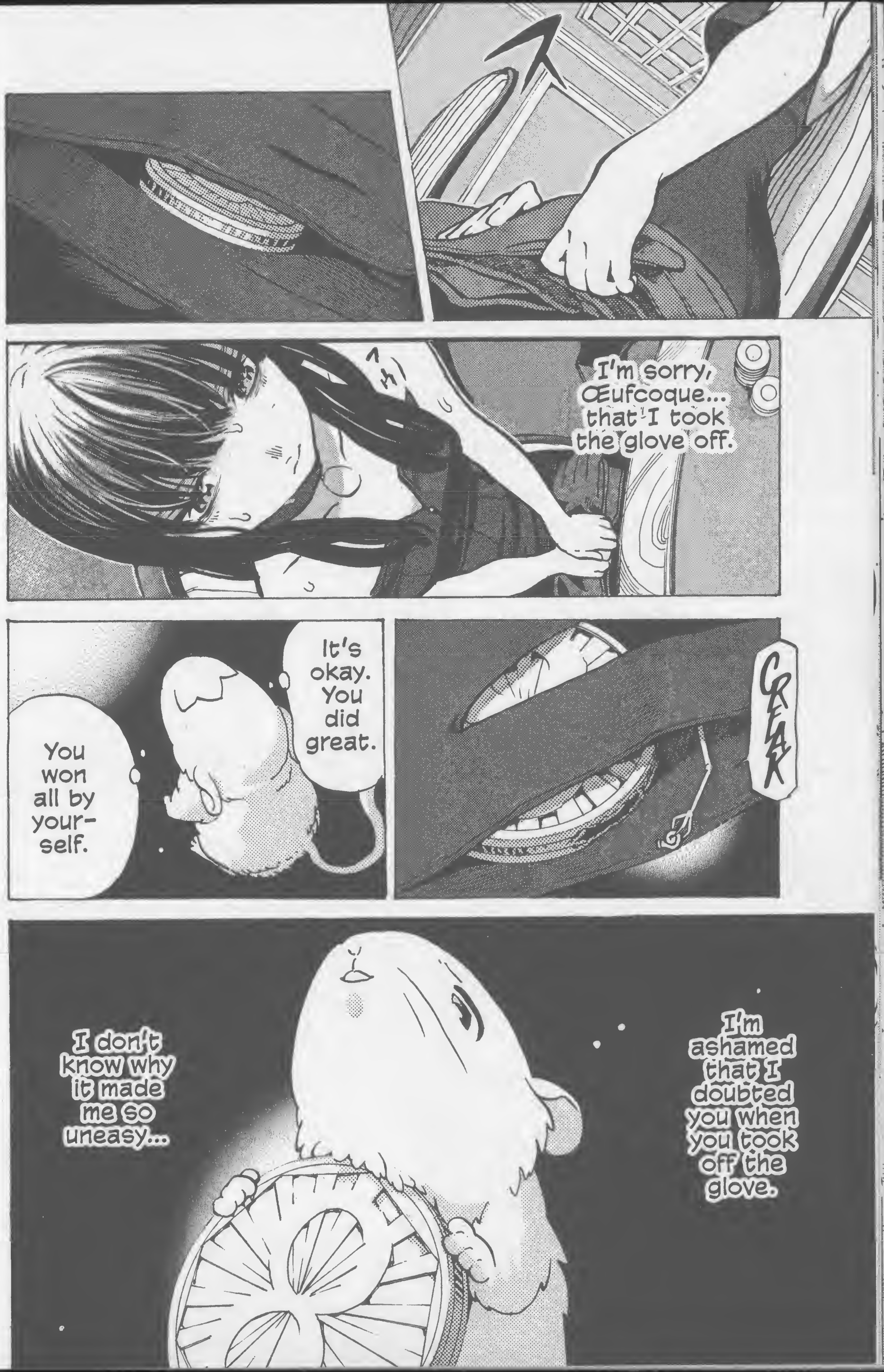

OOOOOHH
Balot !!
...
PANT
Now ...
My down card...
TAP
14...
He'll draw another.

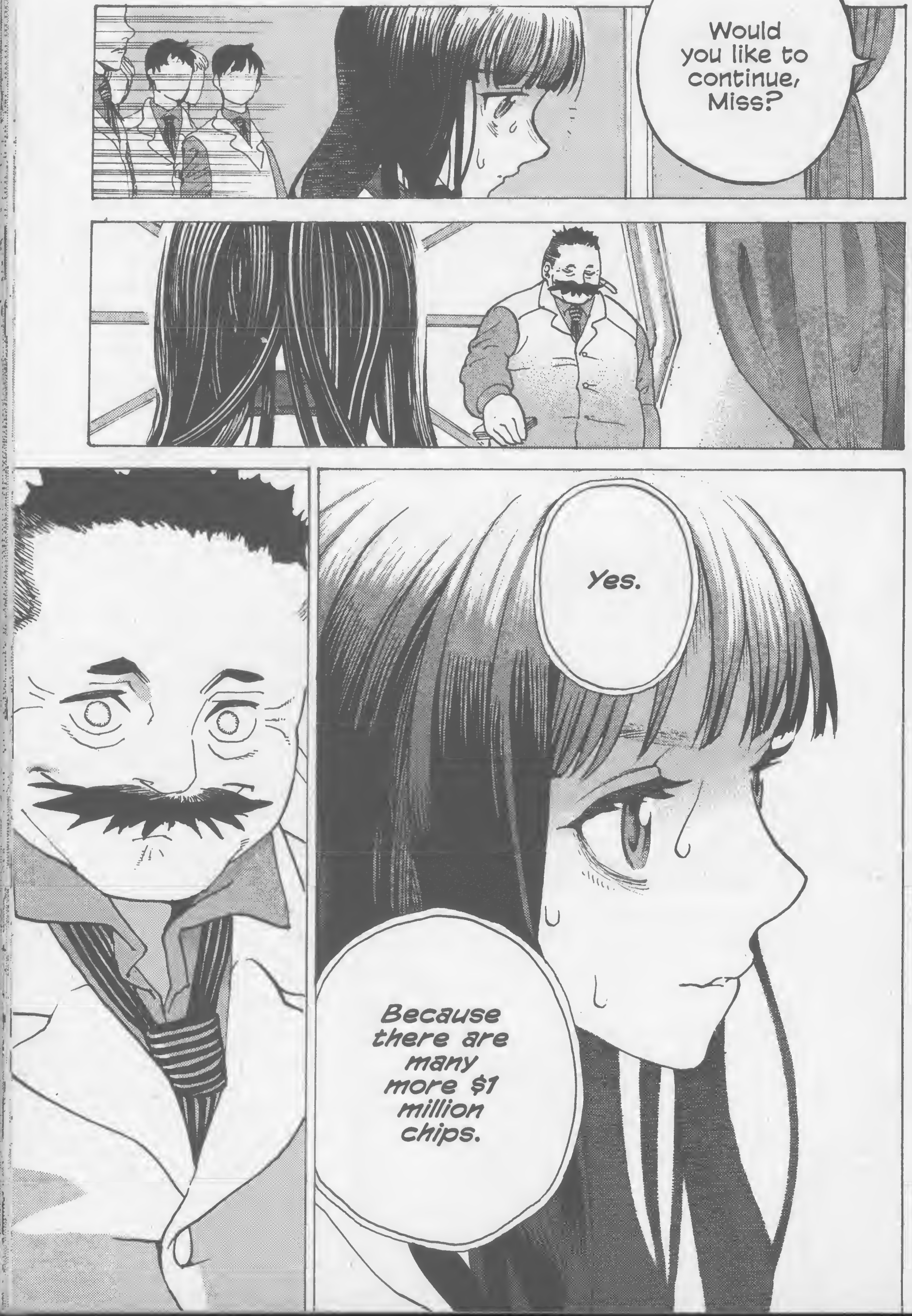

Con-gratula-tions.
I lose.

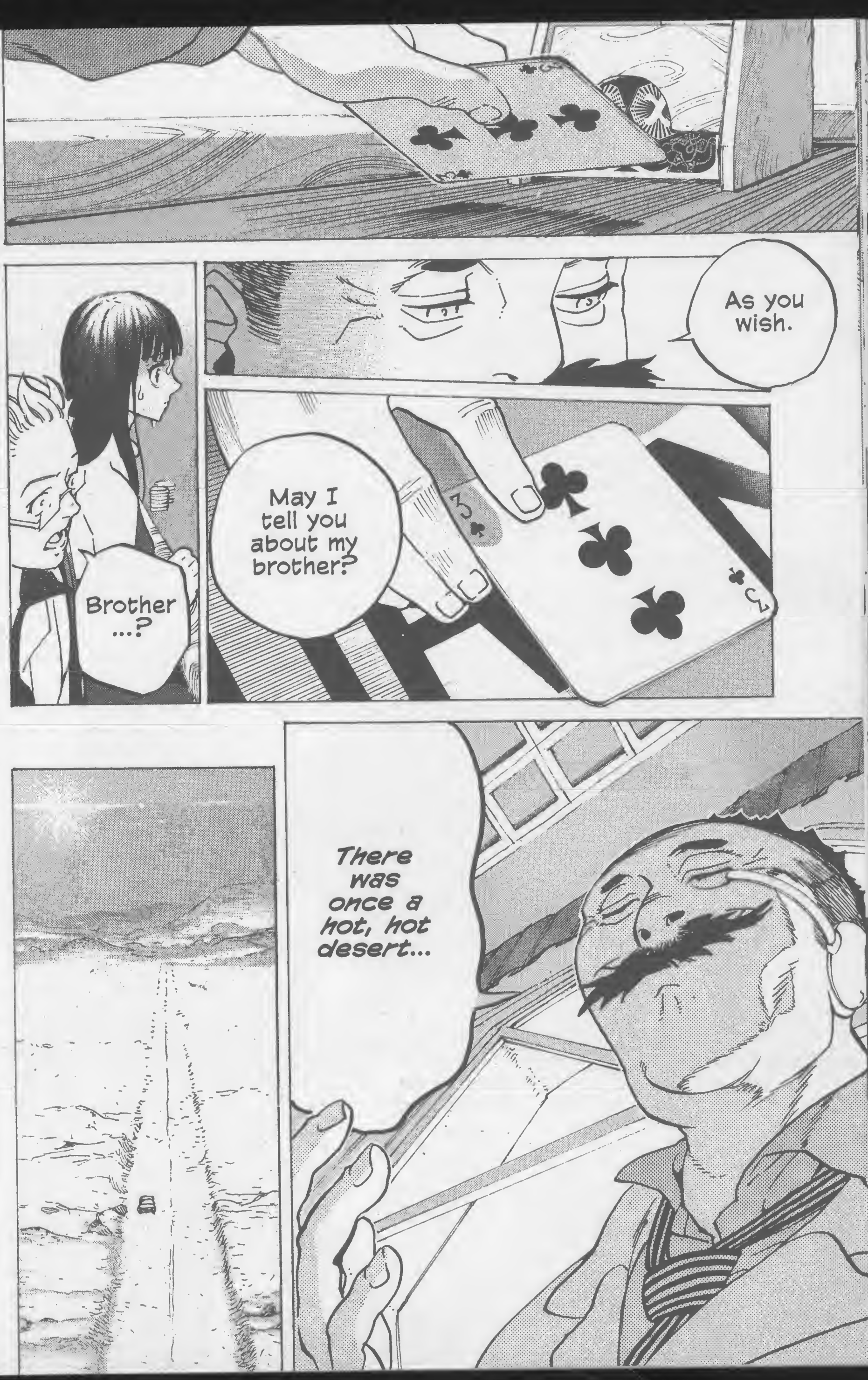

OOOOOHH
You did it, Balot!!
GRAB
You did it!
Impos-sible...
What's wrong?
She made all the right choices.
Right choices ...?

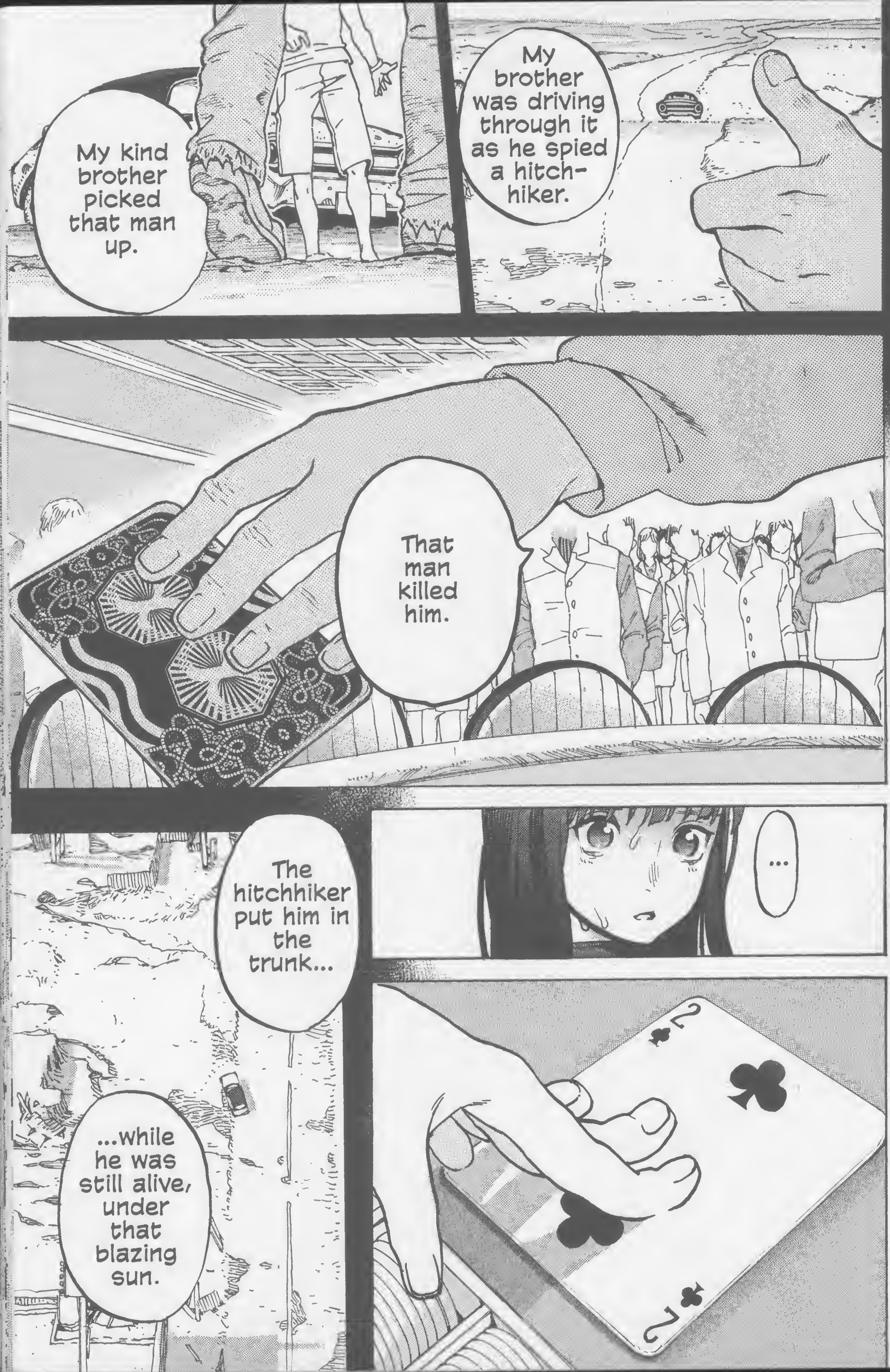

When she made those three reckless hits.
If she hadn't hit at any of those points, Ashley would've won.
I can't believe it.
How did you make such brave choices?
I didn't need bravery.
I just made the choices I had to make.
It was a thread!
I feel like all the cards were connected to my body by a thread.
Before, the thread kept breaking...
...but when I concentrated on your shuffling, I made a very strong thread.

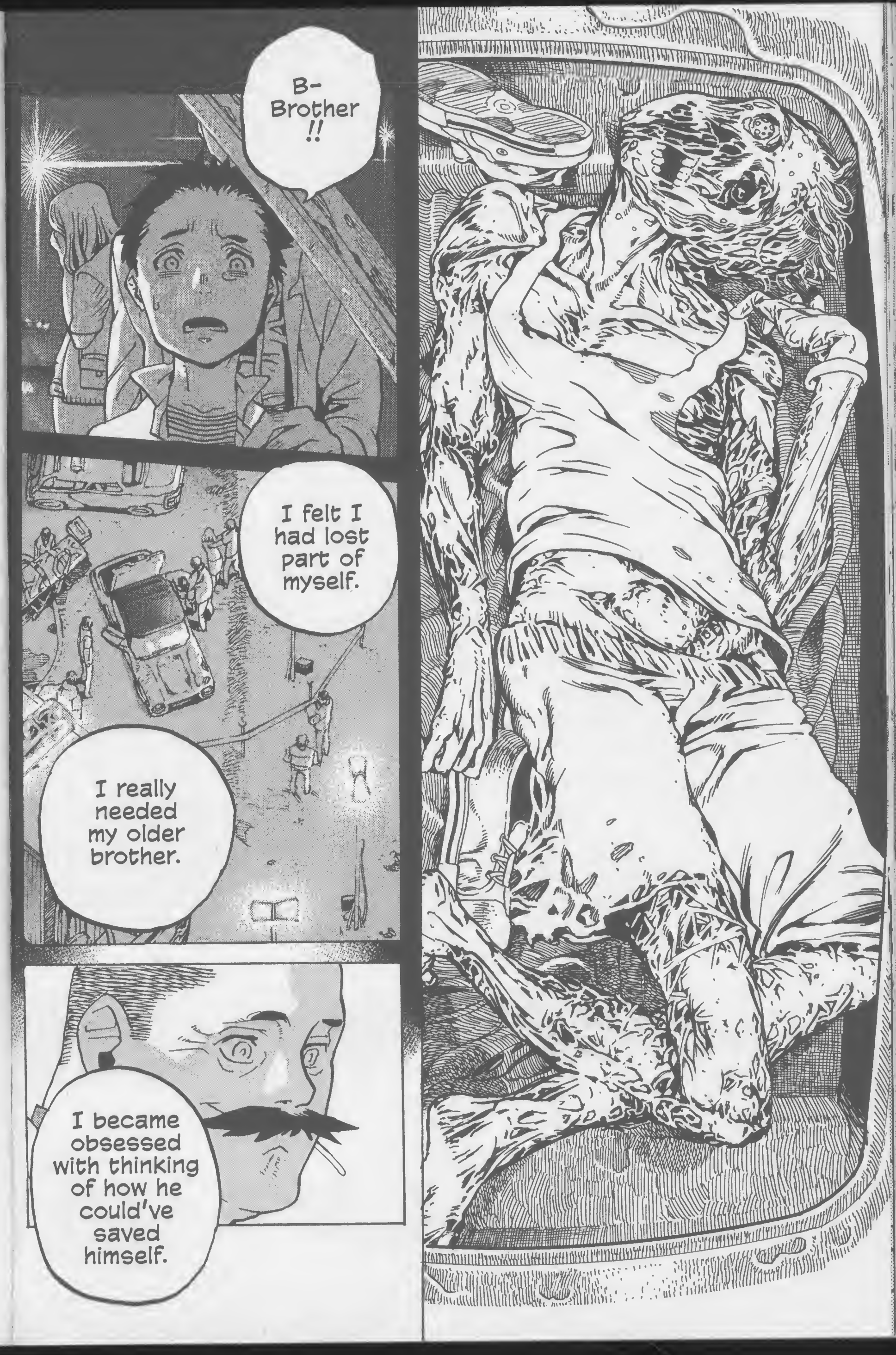

What a strange girl...
Take it.
...
Your second one!!

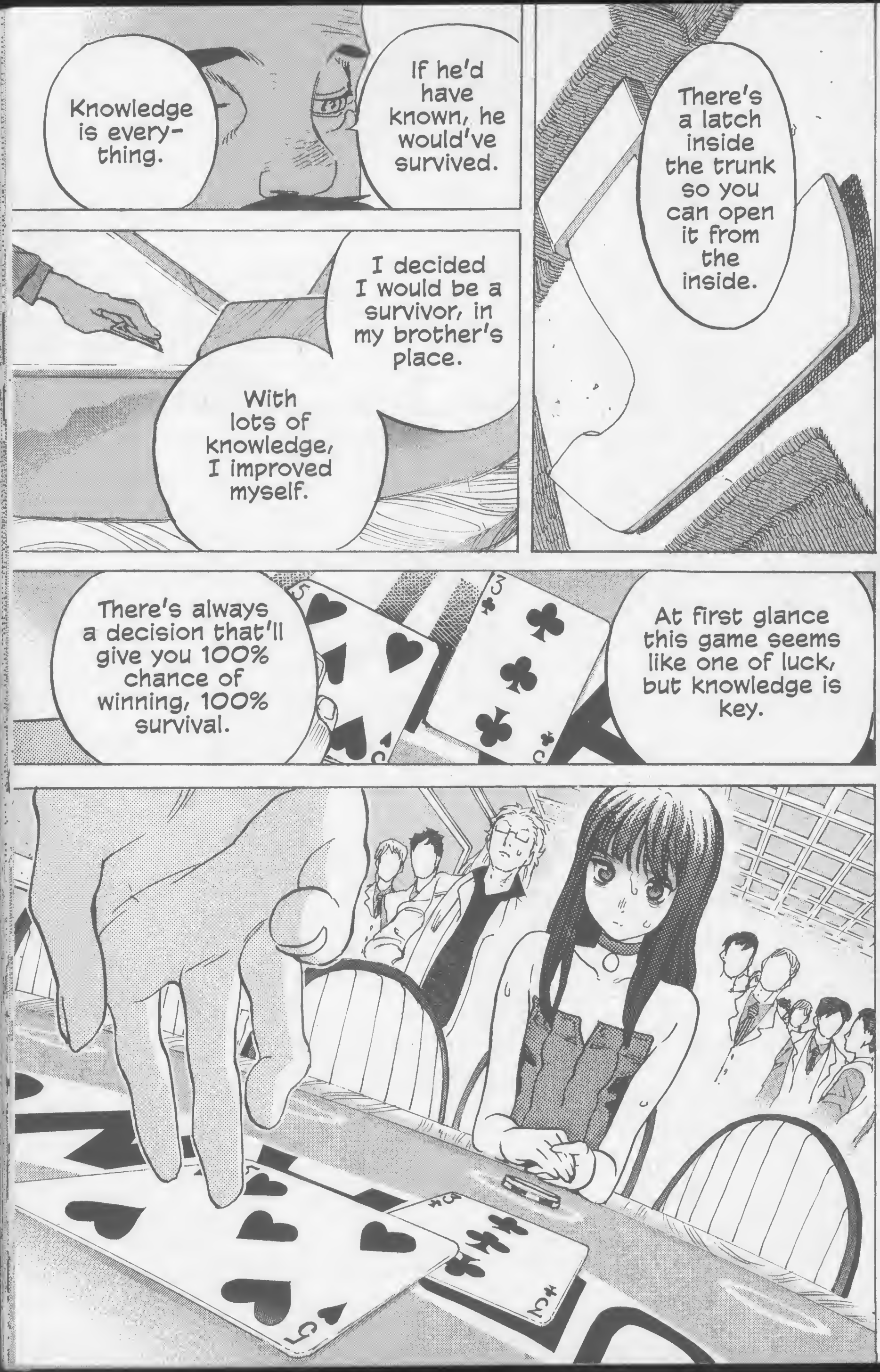

I'm sorry, Œufcoque... that I took the glove off.
CREAK
It's okay. You did great.
You won all by your-self.
I'm ashamed that I doubted you when you took off the glove.
I don't know why it made me so uneasy...

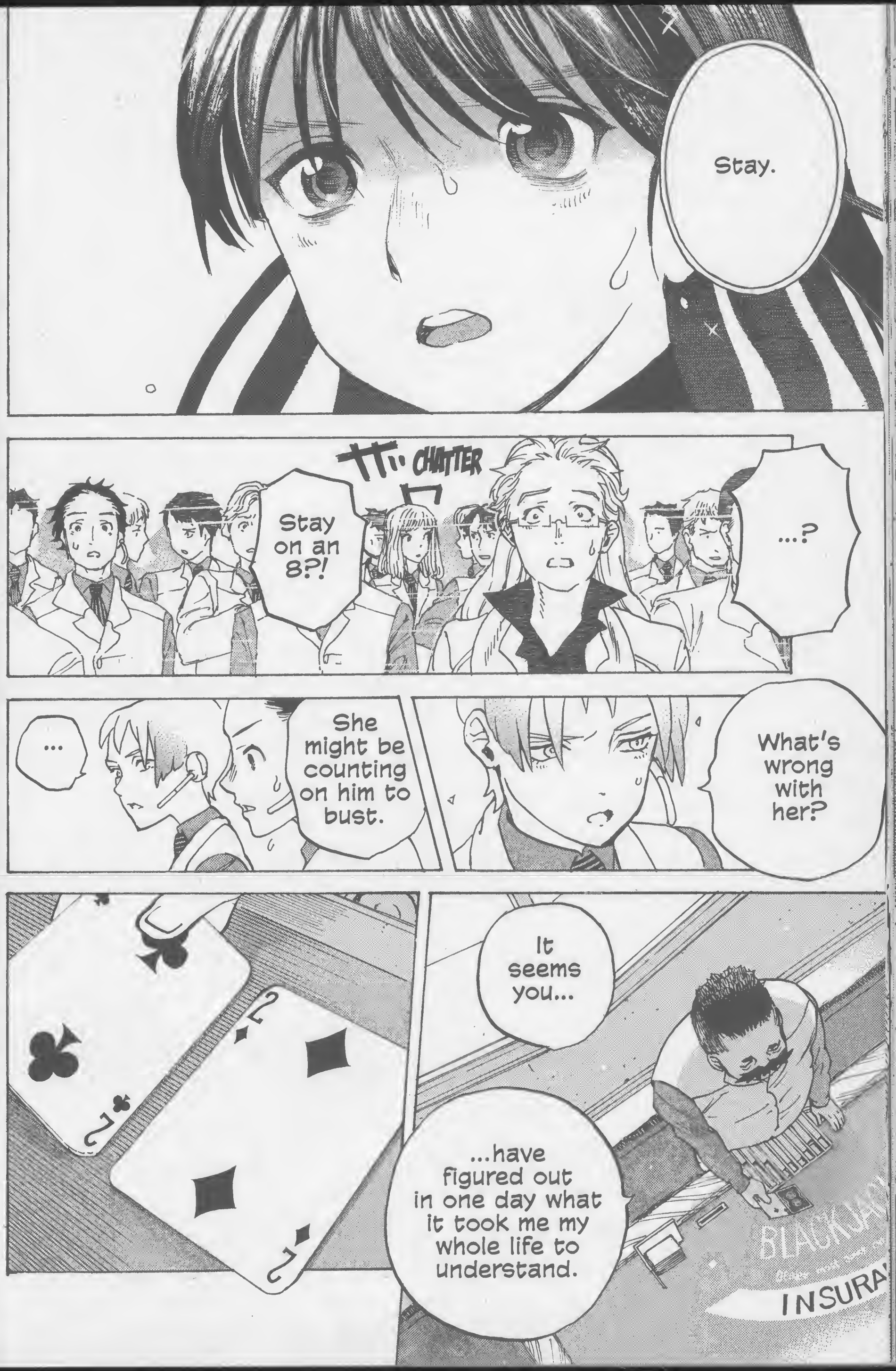

Would you like to continue, Miss?
Yes.
Because there are many more $1 million chips.

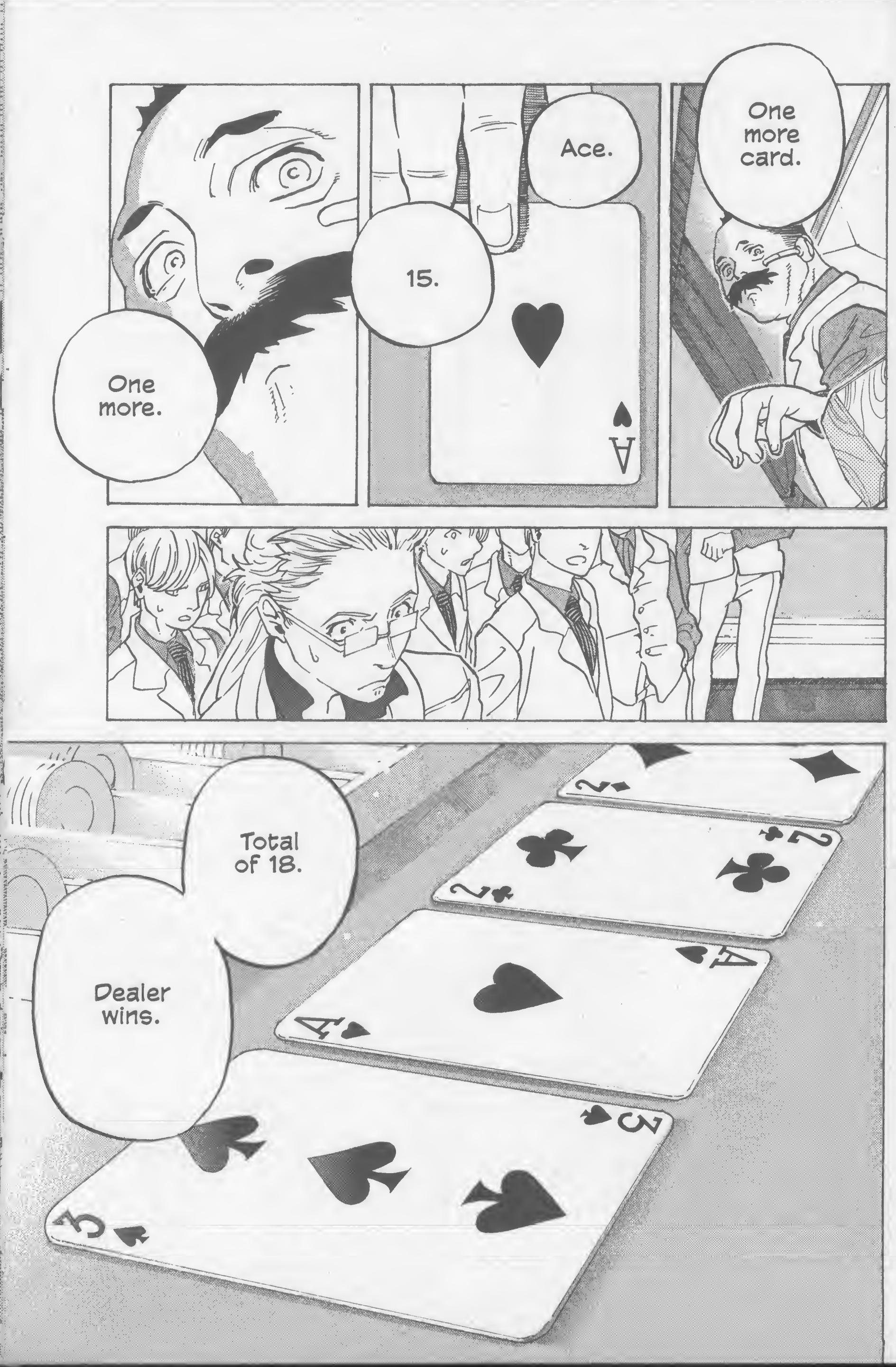

As you wish.
May I tell you about my brother?
Brother ...?
There was once a hot, hot desert...

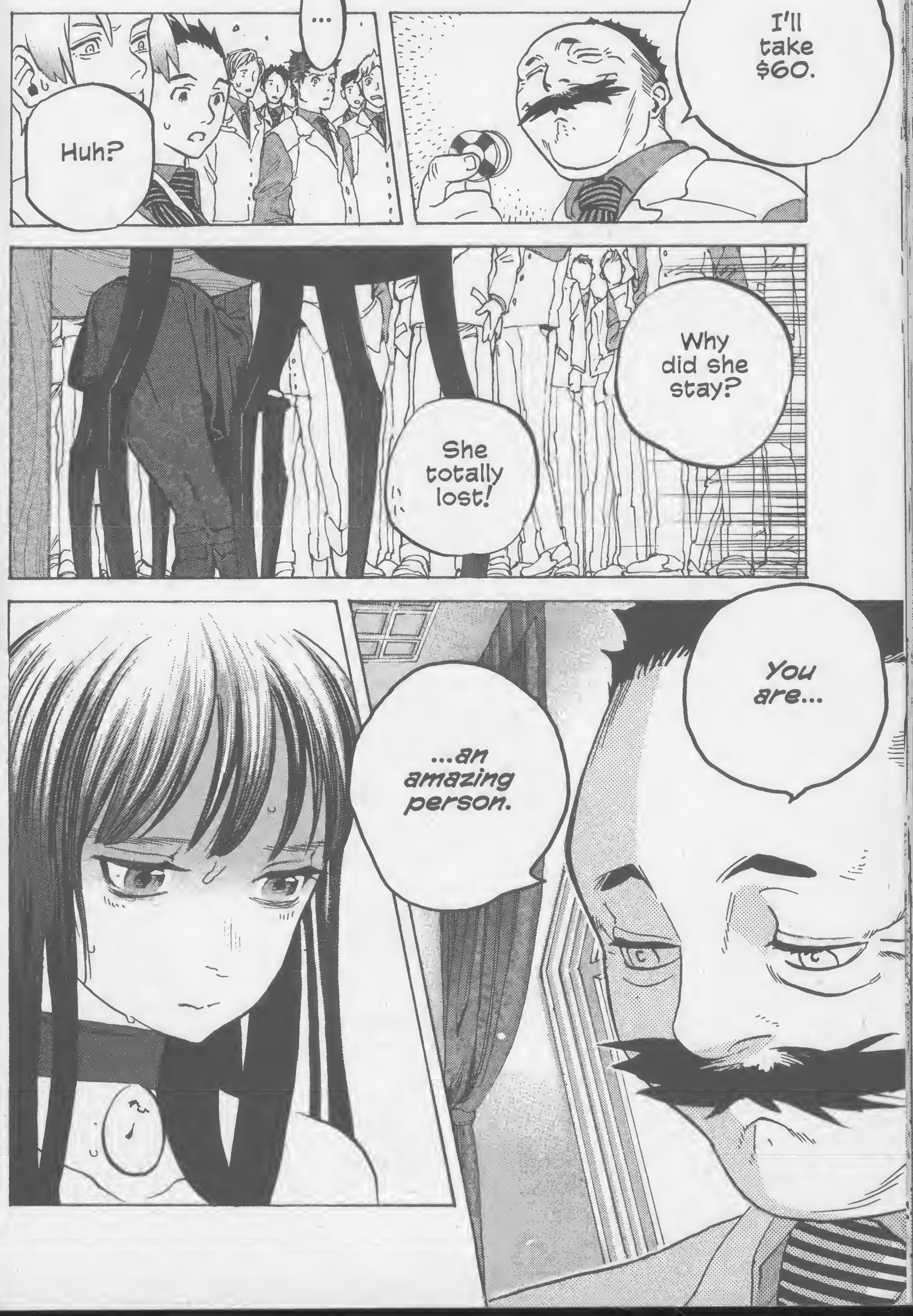

My brother was driving through it as he spied a hitchhiker.
My kind brother picked that man up.
That man killed him.
...
The hitchhiker put him in the trunk...
...while he was still alive, under that blazing sun.

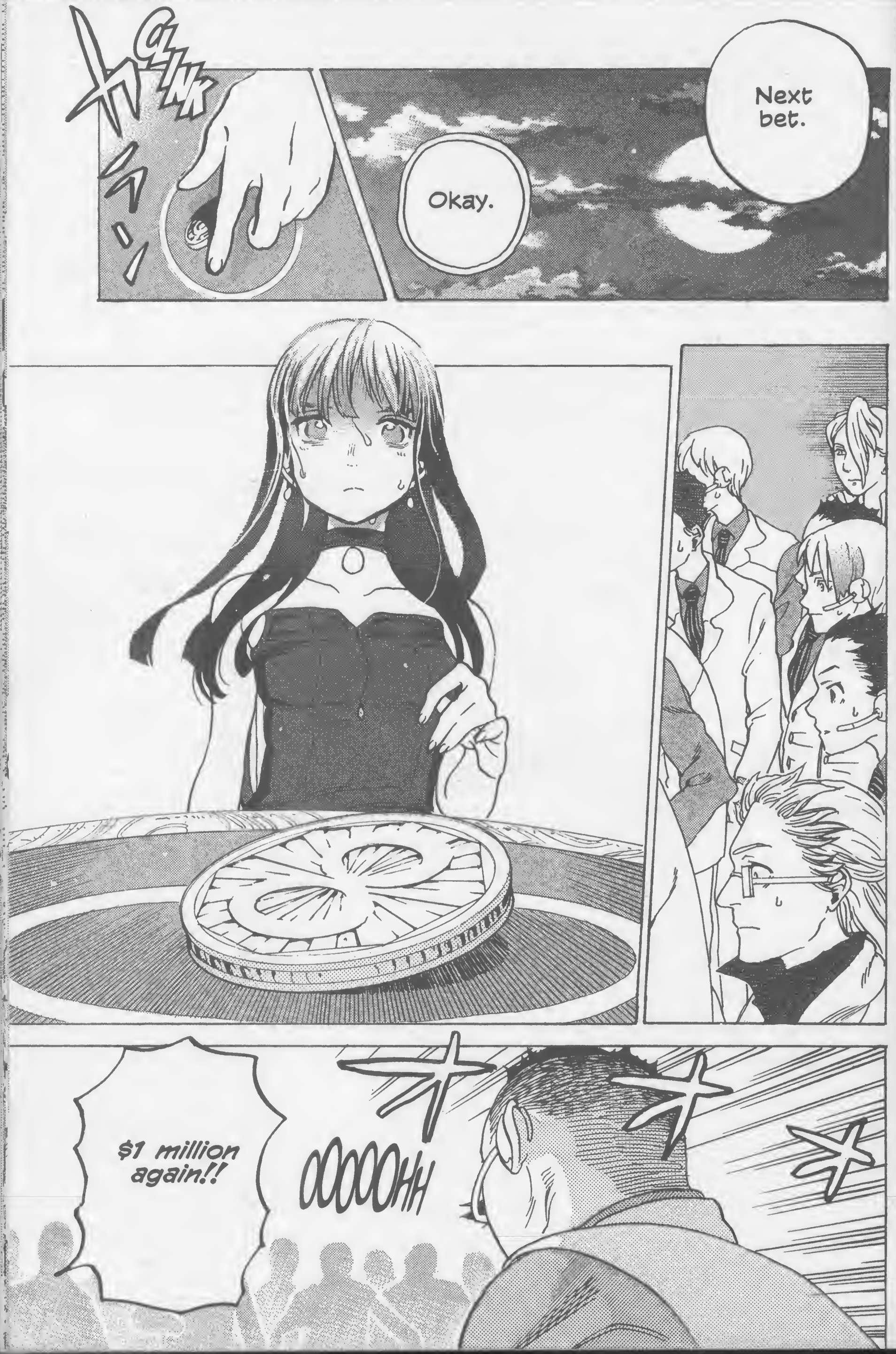

B-Brother!!
I felt I had lost part of myself.
I really needed my older brother.
I became obsessed with thinking of how he could've saved himself.

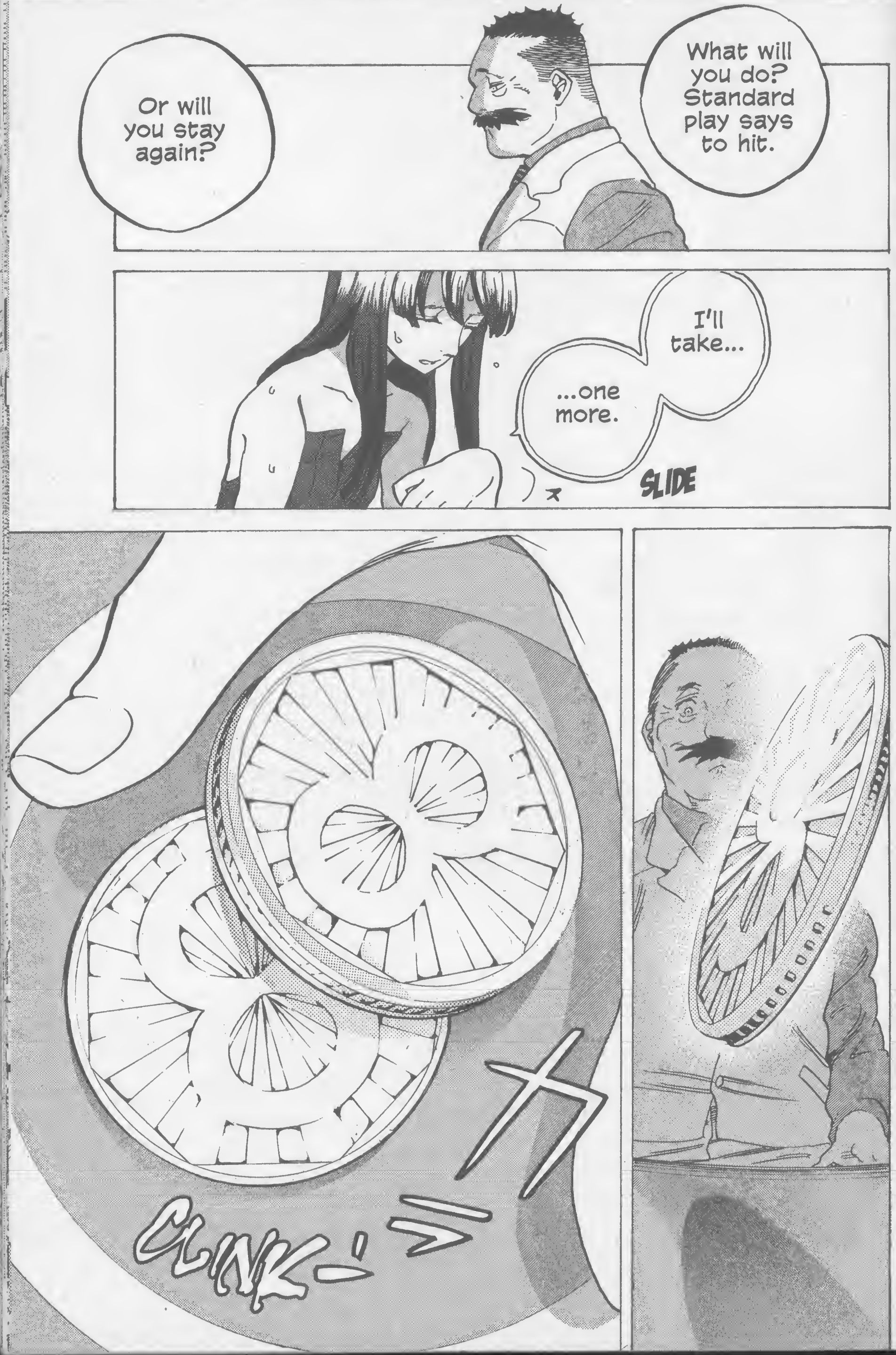

There's a latch inside the trunk so you can open it from the inside.
If he'd have known, he would've survived.
Knowledge is everything.
I decided I would be a survivor, in my brother's place.
With lots of knowledge, I improved myself.
At first glance this game seems like one of luck, but knowledge is key.
There's always a decision that'll give you 100% chance of winning, 100% survival.

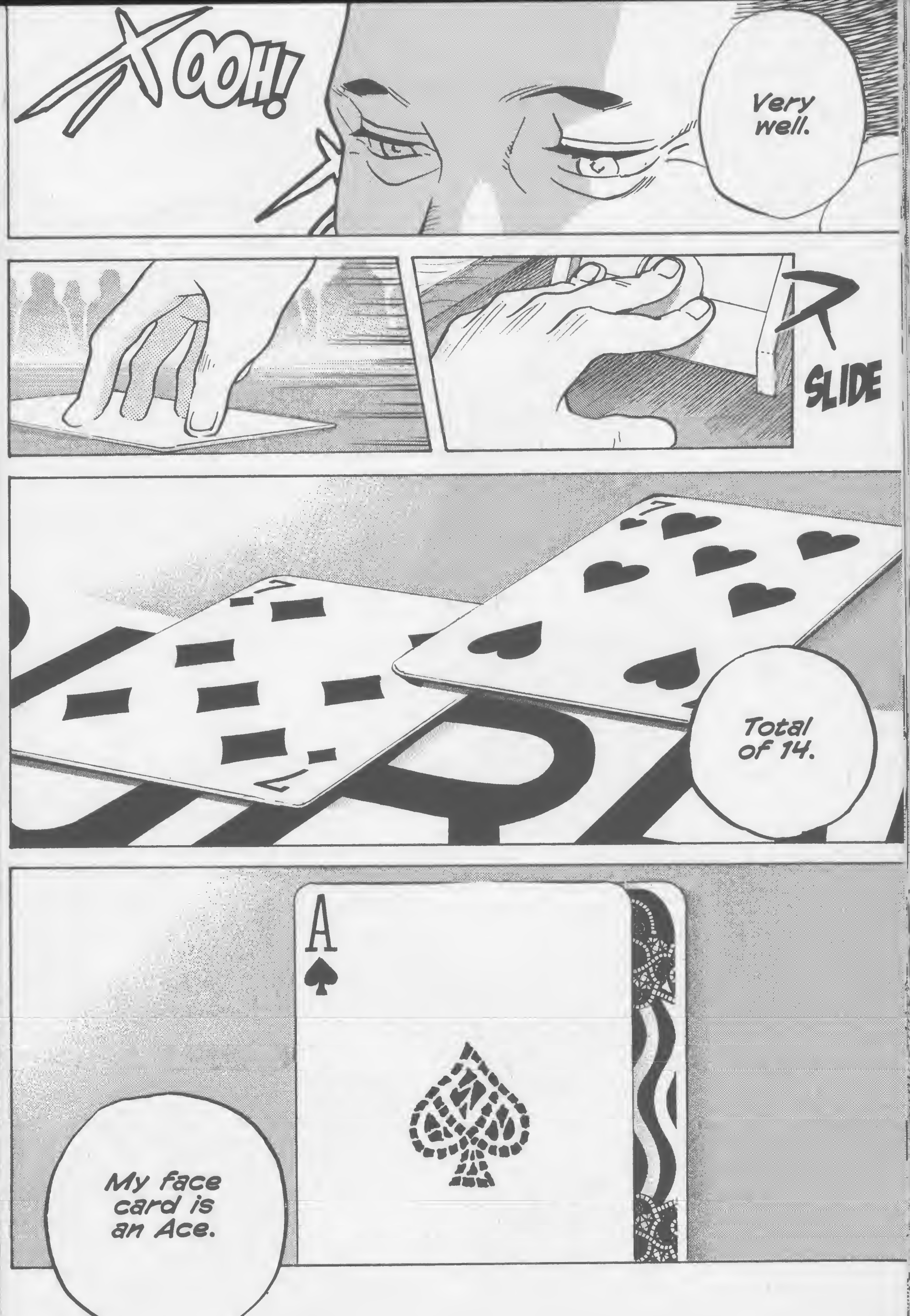

Stay.
...?
CHATTER
Stay on an 8?!
What's wrong with her?
She might be counting on him to bust.
...
It seems you...
...have figured out in one day what it took me my whole life to understand.
INSURA

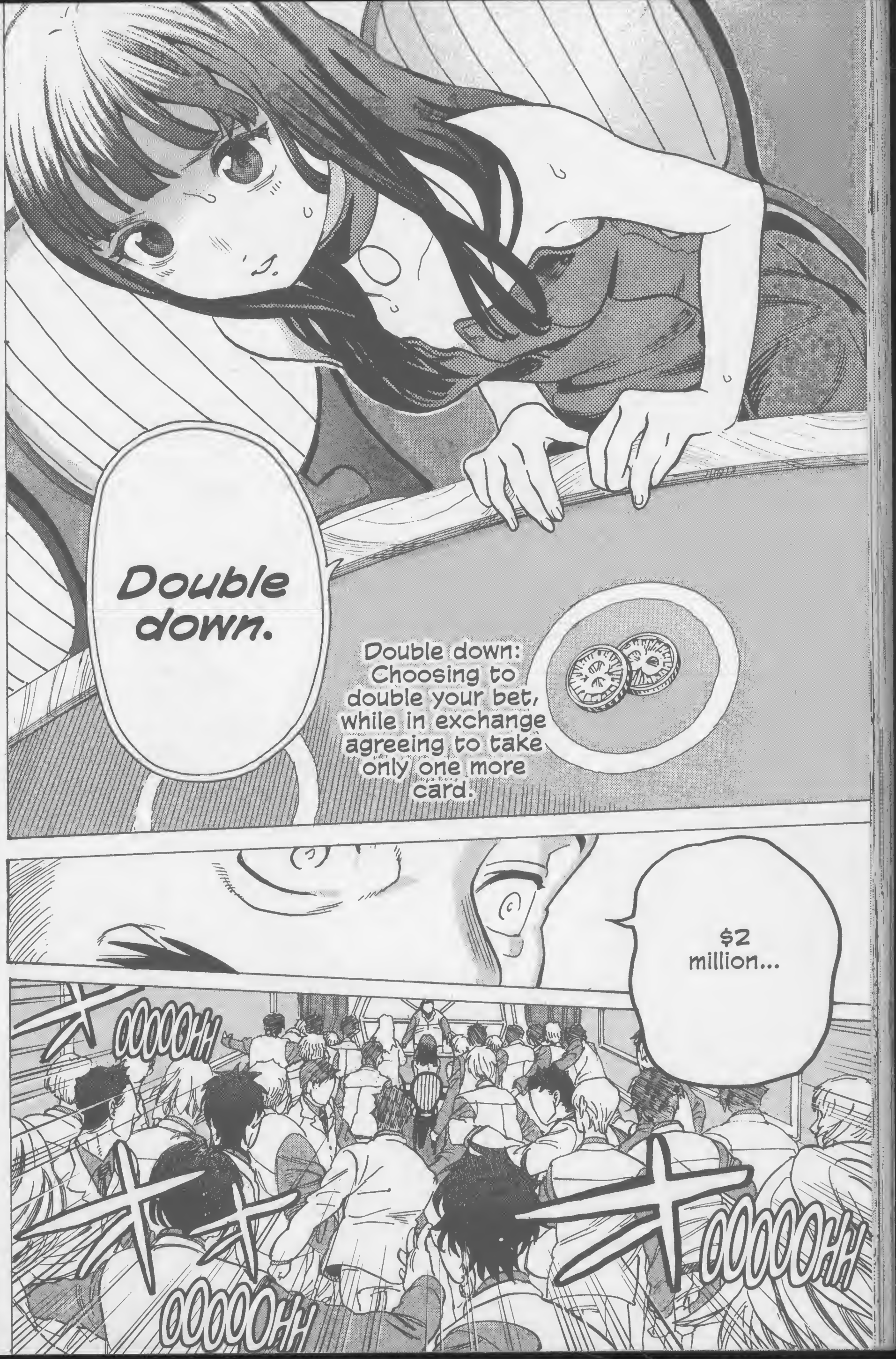

One more card.
Ace.
15.
One more.
Total of 18.
Dealer wins.

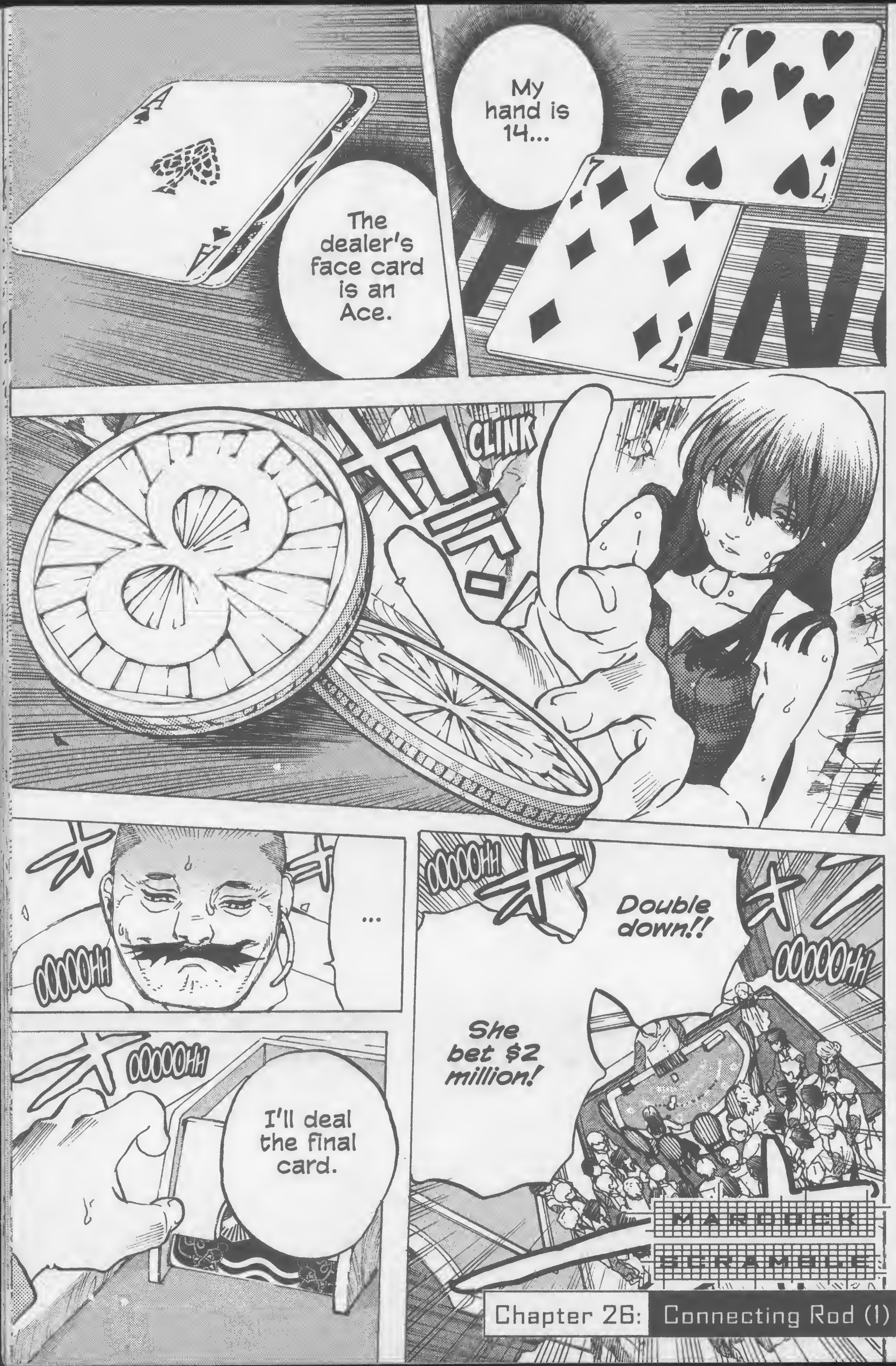

I'll take $60.
...
Huh?
Why did she stay?
She totally lost!
You are...
...an amazing person.


Next bet.
Okay.
CLINK
カラン
OOOOOHH
$1 million again!!

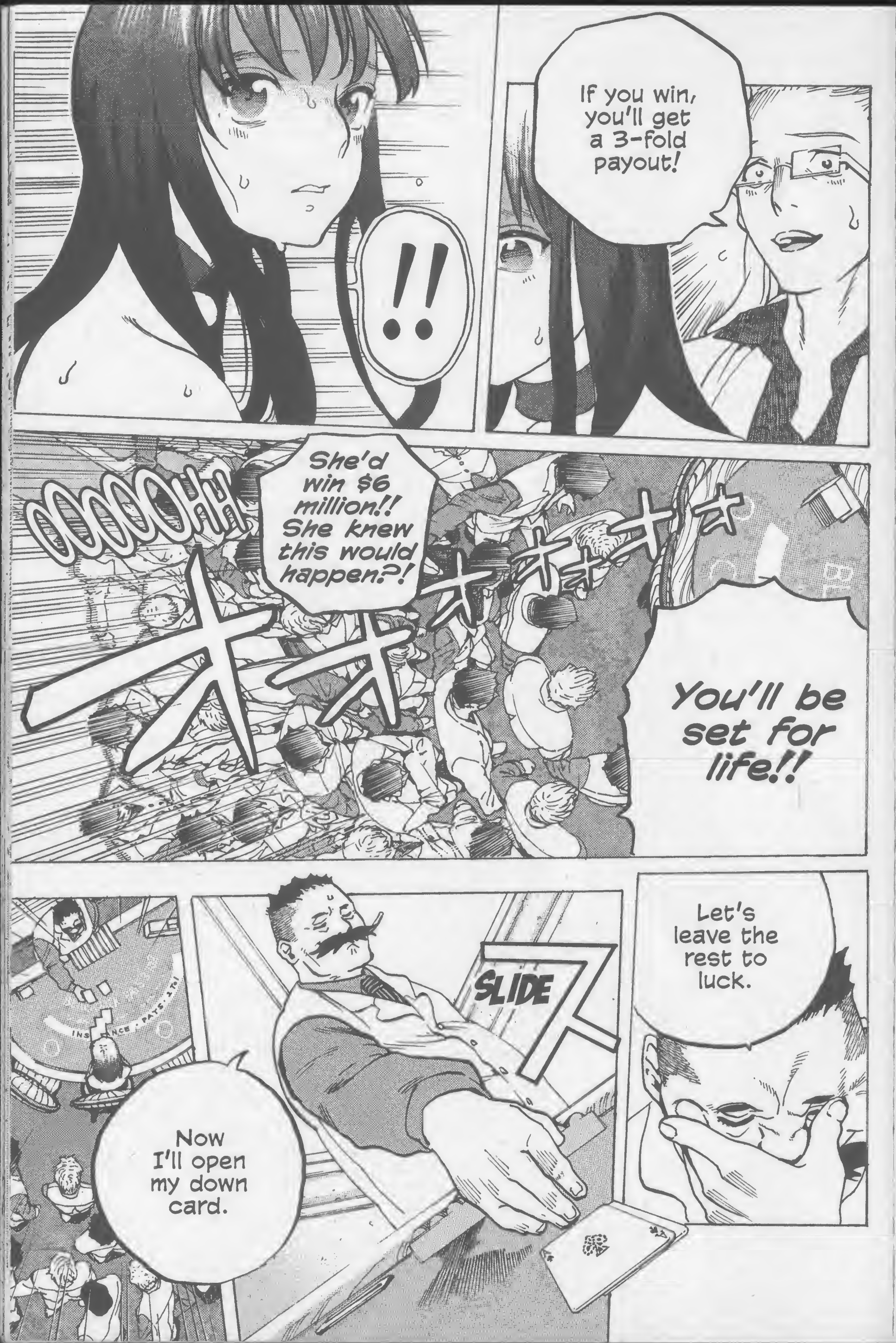

What will you do? Standard play says to hit.
Or will you stay again?
I'll take...
...one more.
SLIDE
CLINK-!

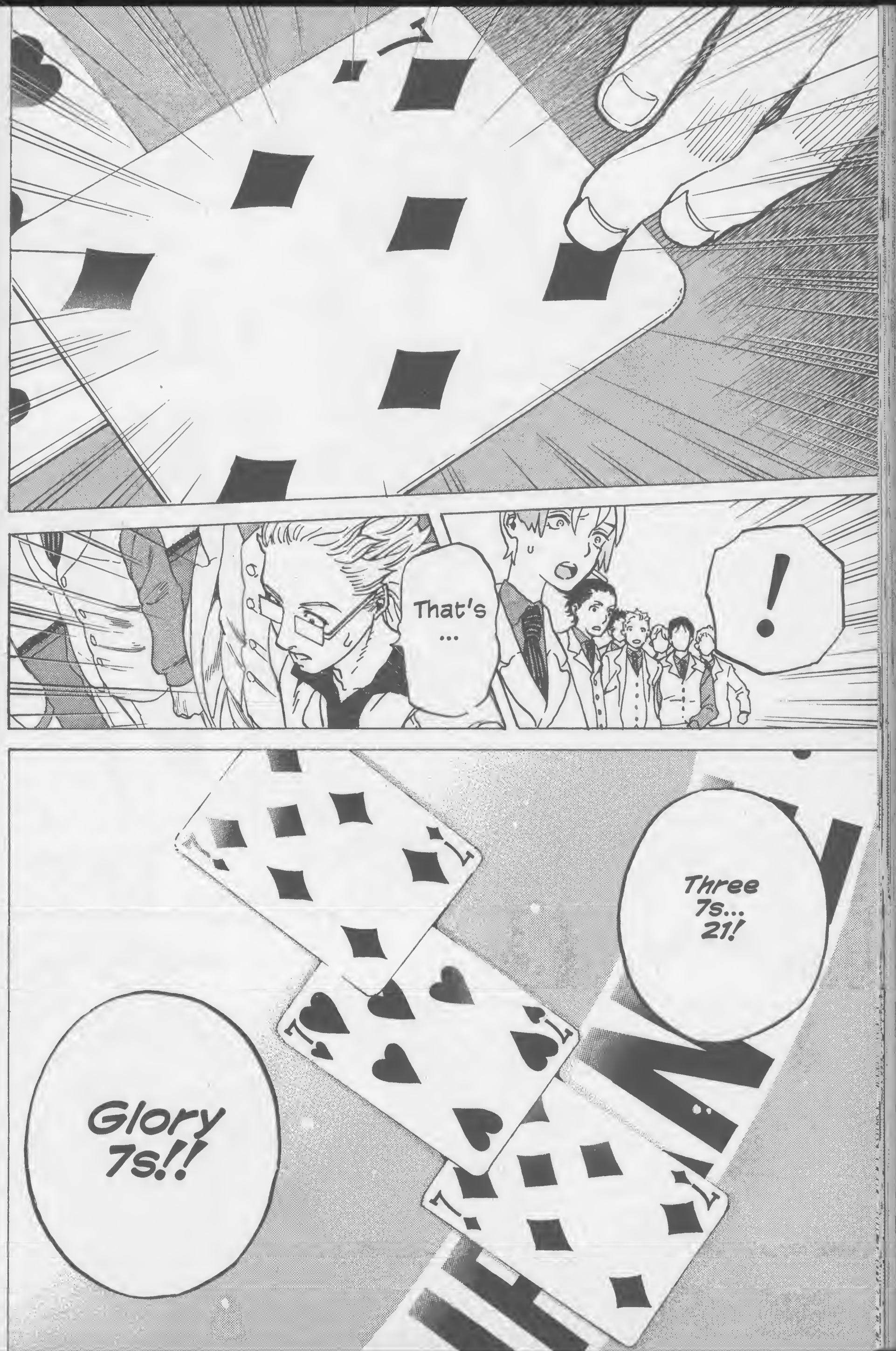

XOOH!
Very well.
SLIDE
Total of 14.
A
My face card is an Ace.

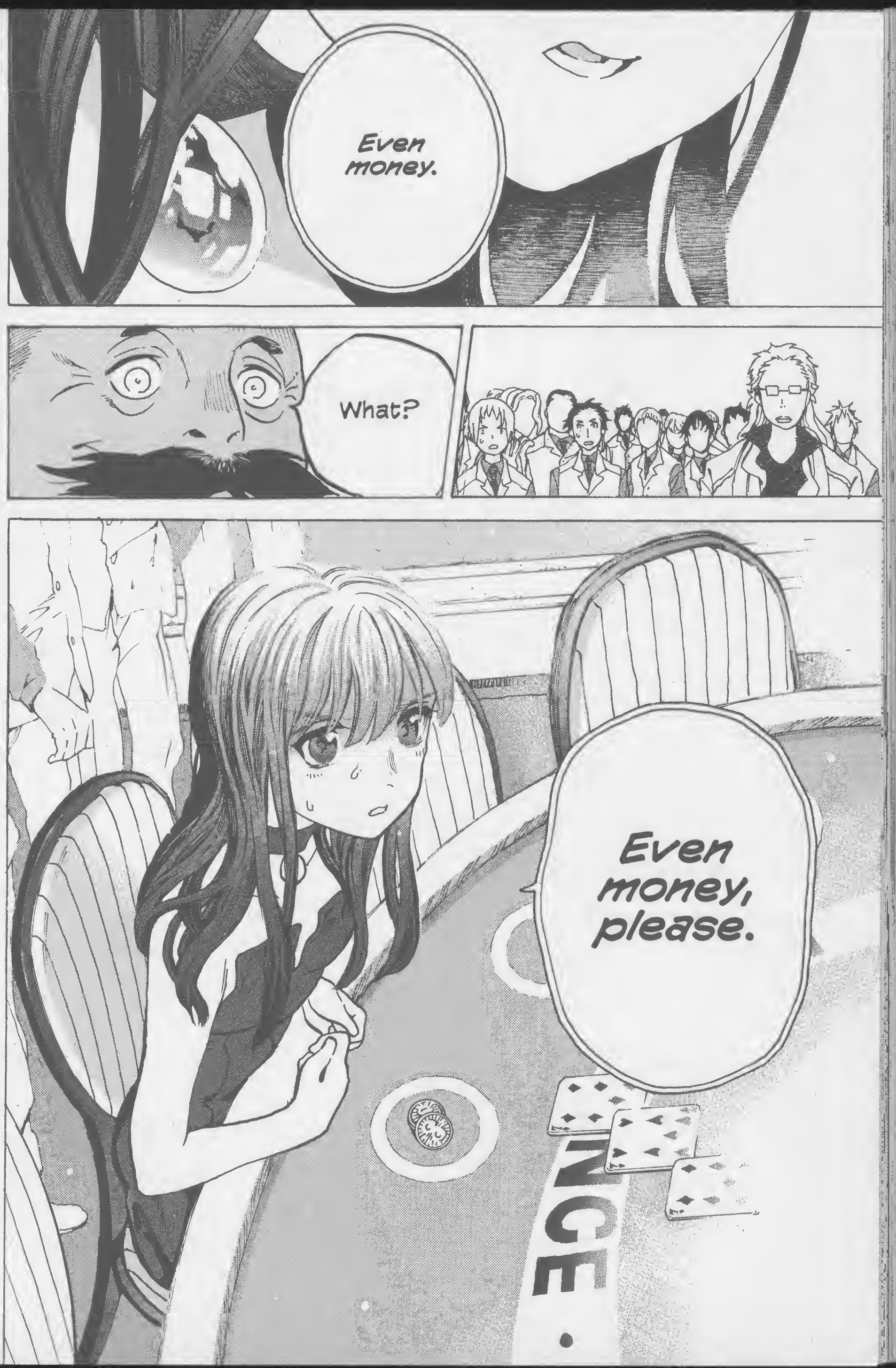

Double down.
Double down: Choosing to double your bet, while in exchange agreeing to take only one more card.
$2 million...
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH

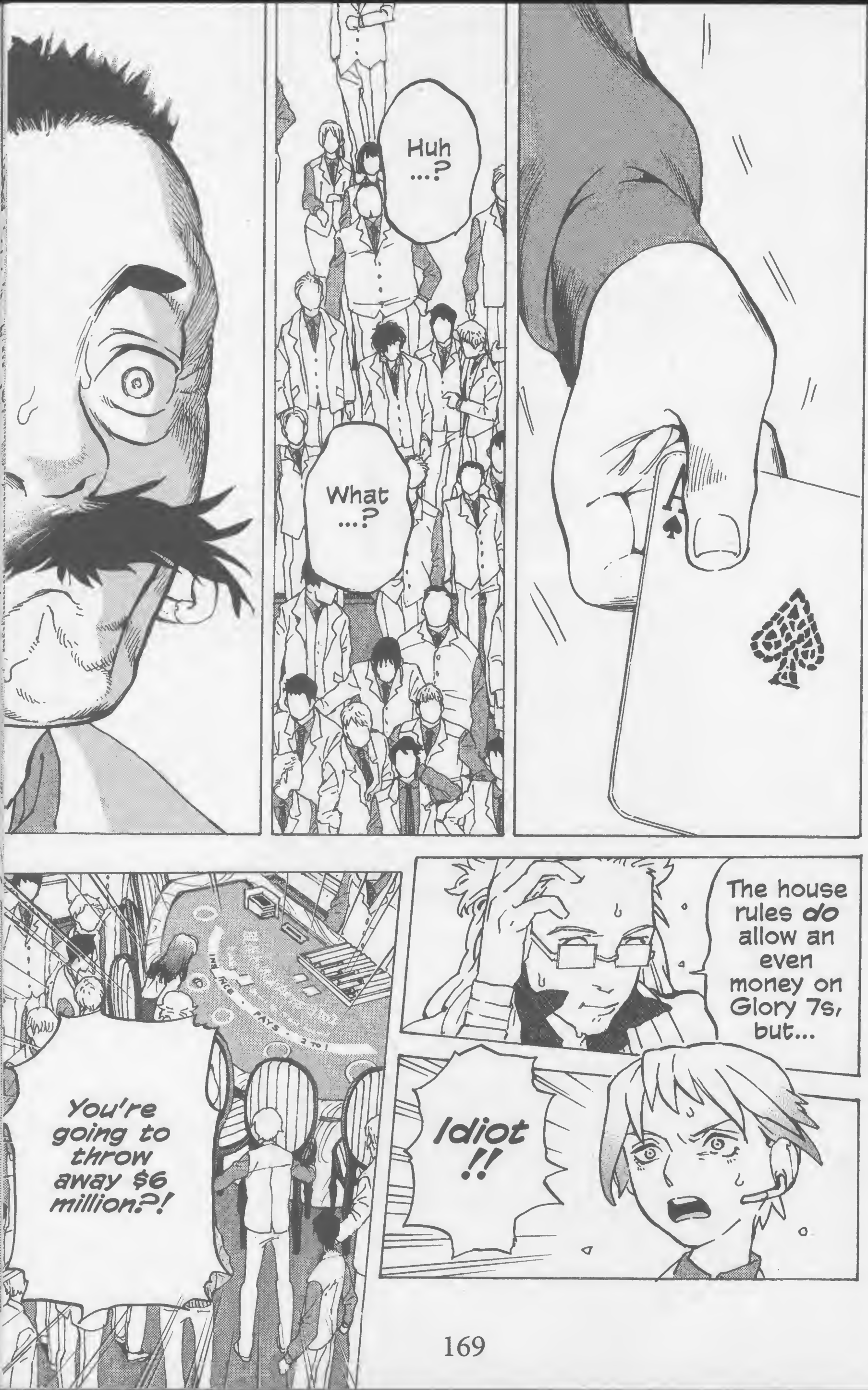

My hand is 14...
The dealer's face card is an Ace.
CLINK
...
OOOOOHH
Double down!!
OOOOOHH
OOOOOHH
She bet $2 million!
OOOOOHH
I'll deal the final card.
MARDOCK
SCRAMBLE

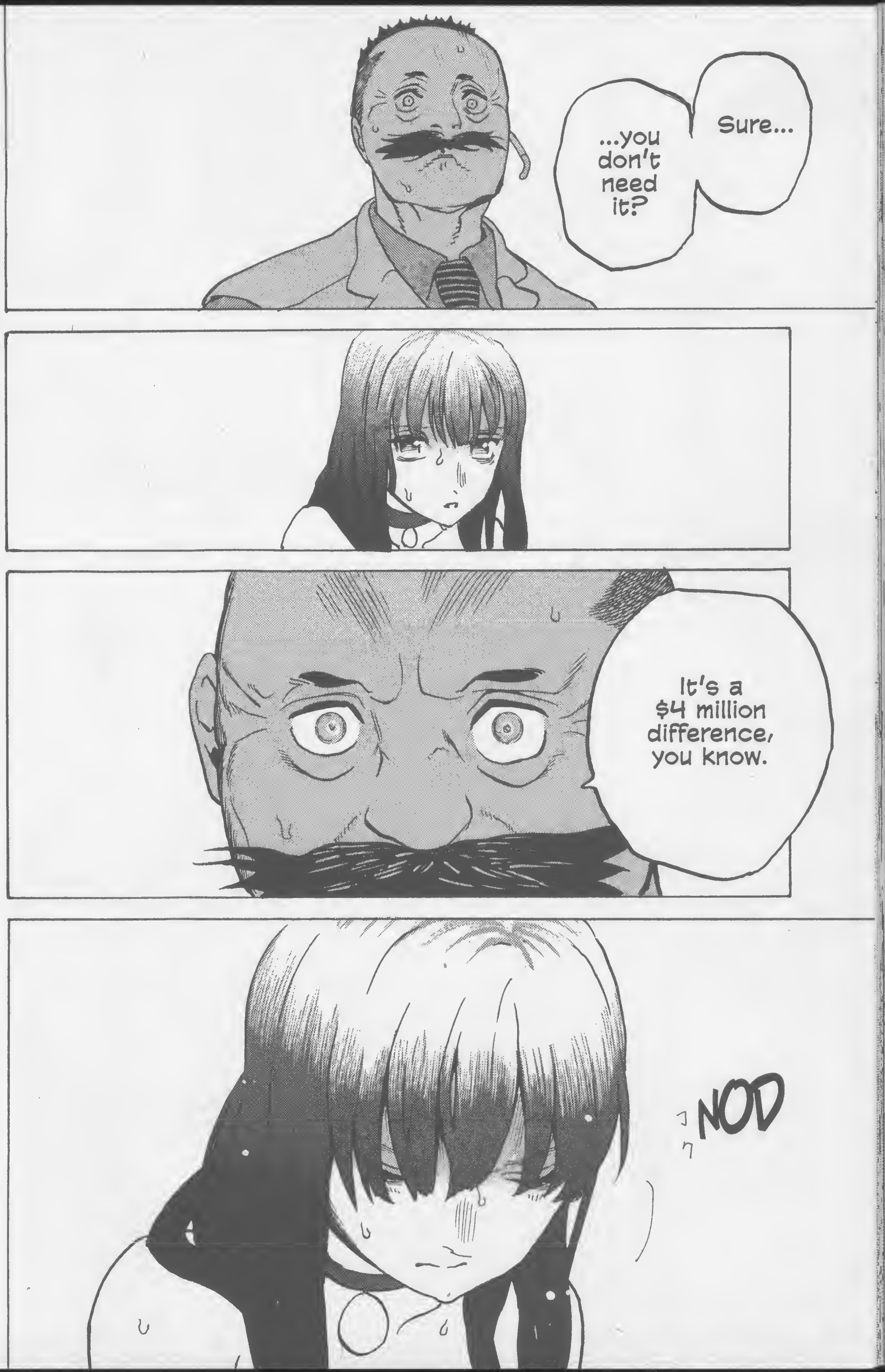
Chapter 26: Connecting Rod (1)

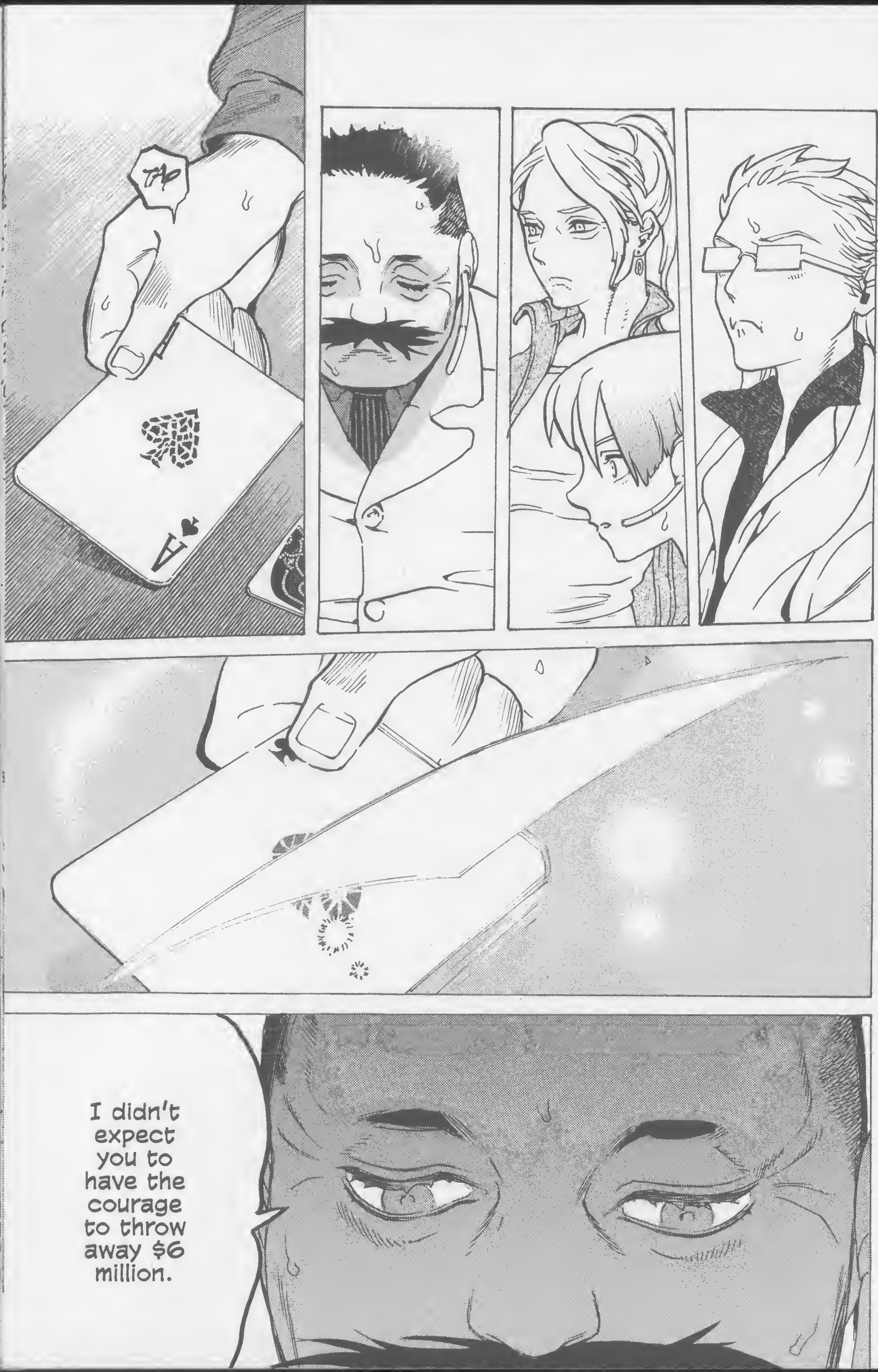

If you win, you'll get a 3-fold payout!
!!
She'd win $6 million!! She knew this would happen?!
OOOOOHH
オオオオオオオ
You'll be set for life!!
Let's leave the rest to luck.
SLIDE
Now I'll open my down card.

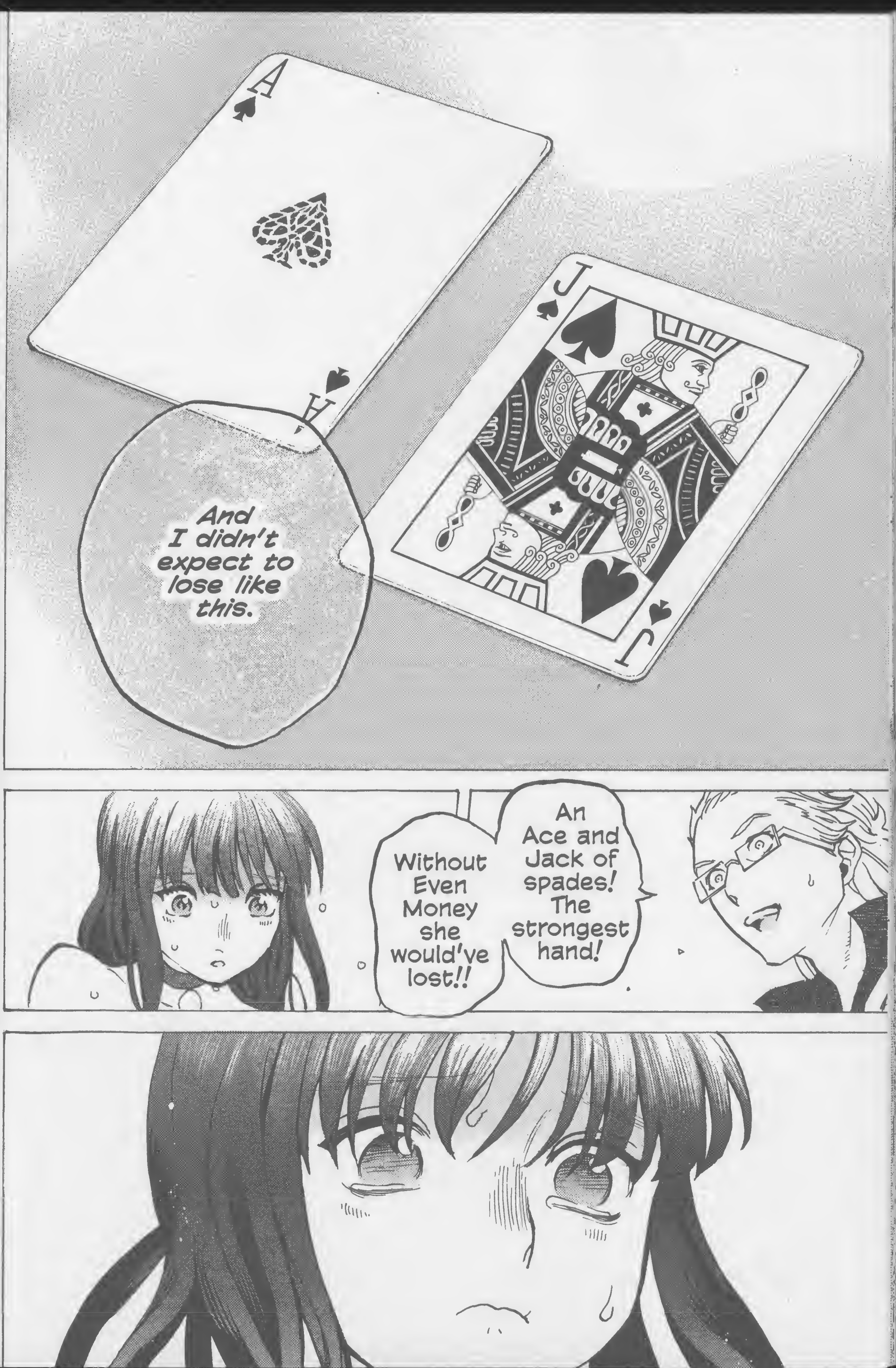

!
That's ...
Three 7s... 21!
Glory 7s!!

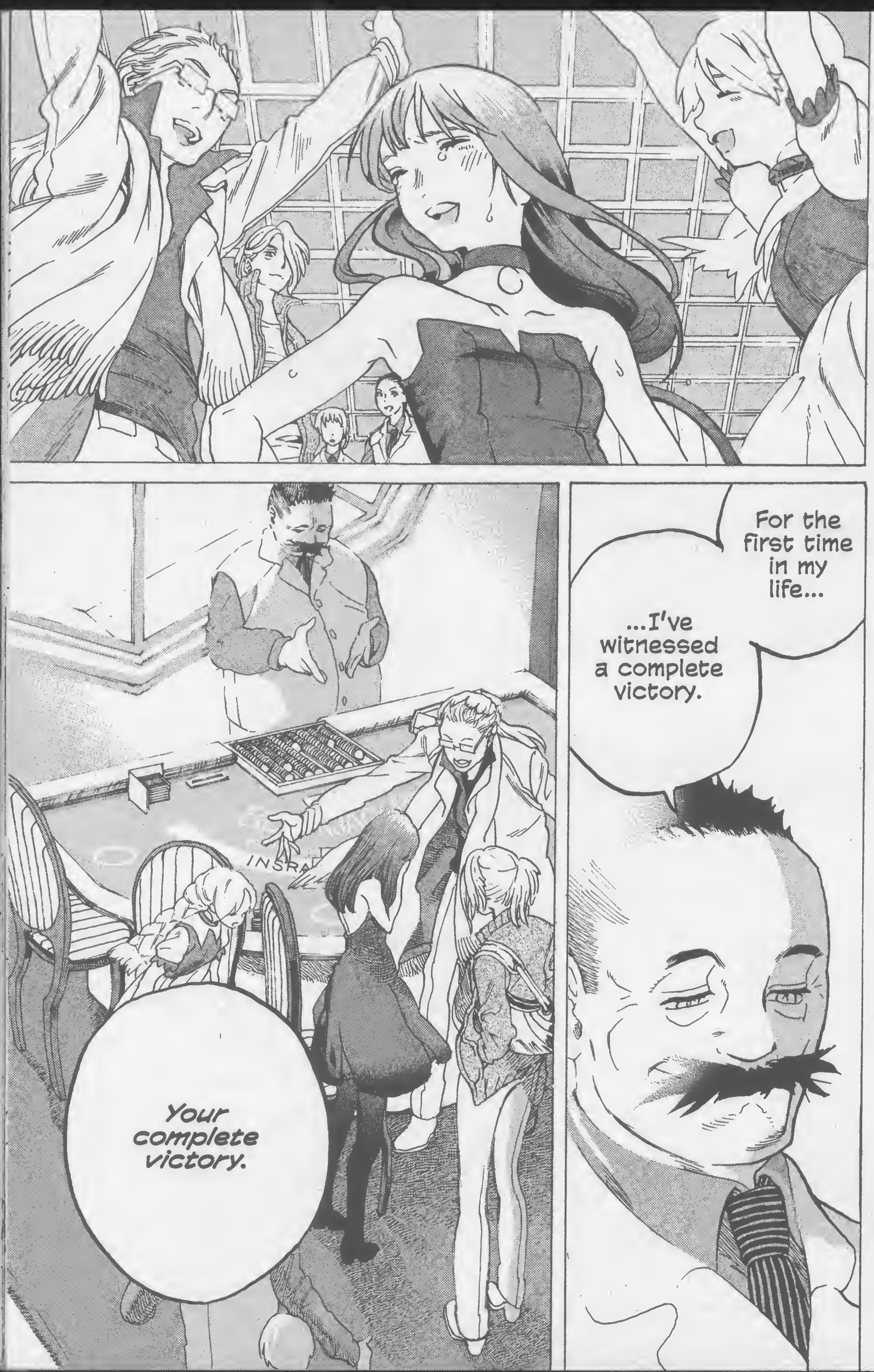

Even money.
What?
Even money, please.
NCE

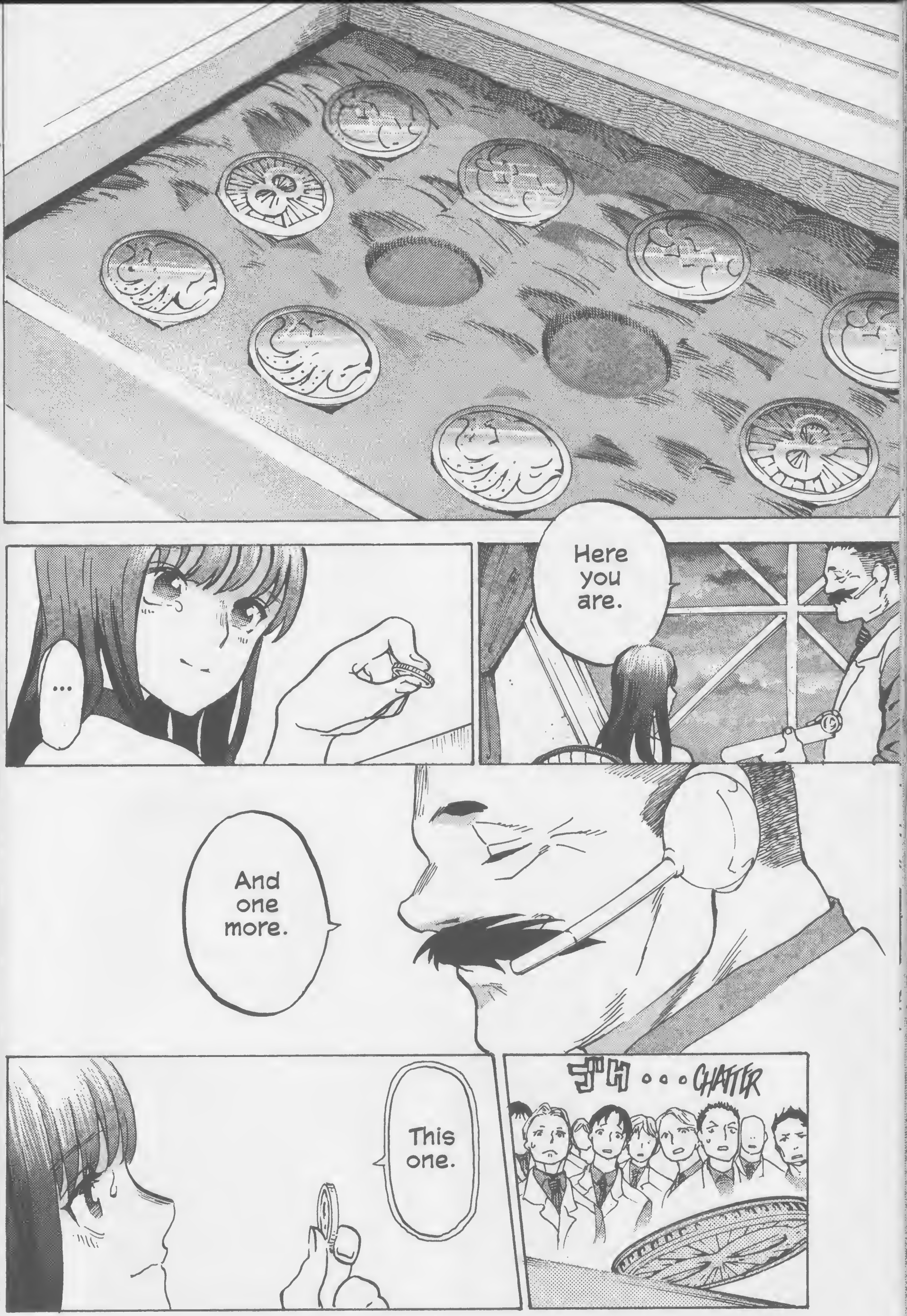

Huh ...?
What ...?
The house rules *do* allow an even money on Glory 7s, but...
Idiot !!
You're going to throw away $6 million?!

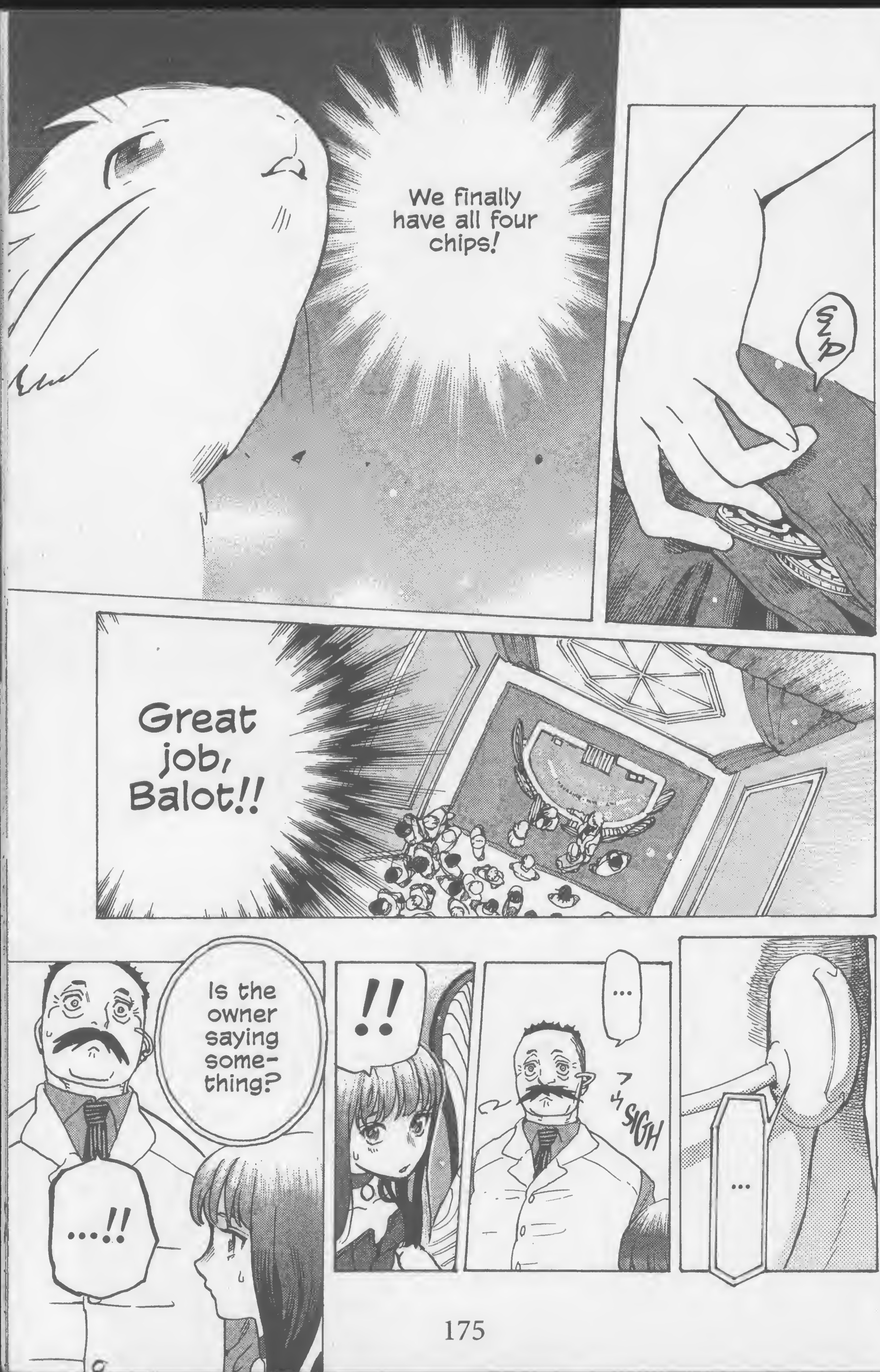

Sure...
...you don't need it?
It's a $4 million difference, you know.
NOD

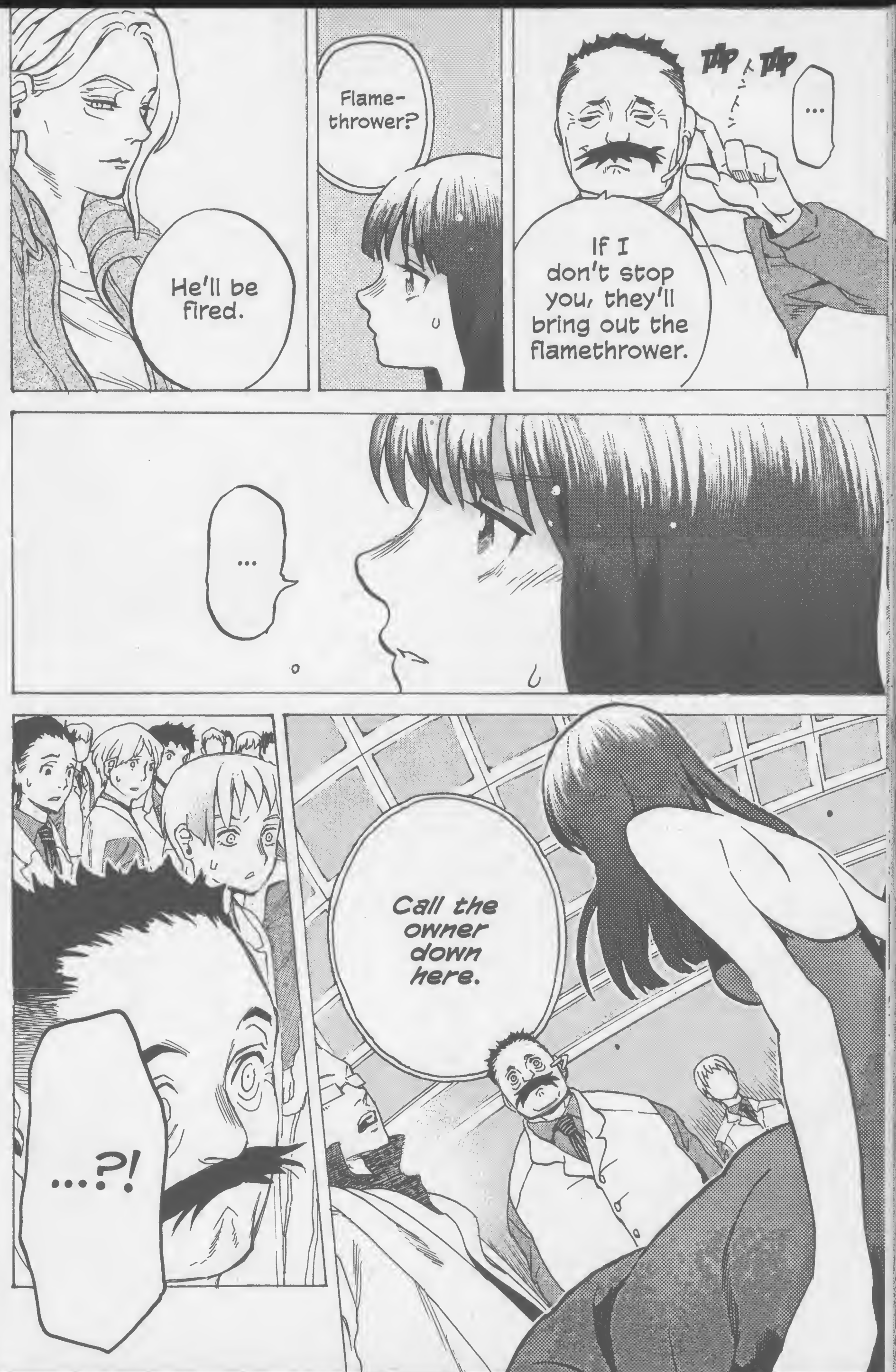

TAP
I didn't expect you to have the courage to throw away $6 million.

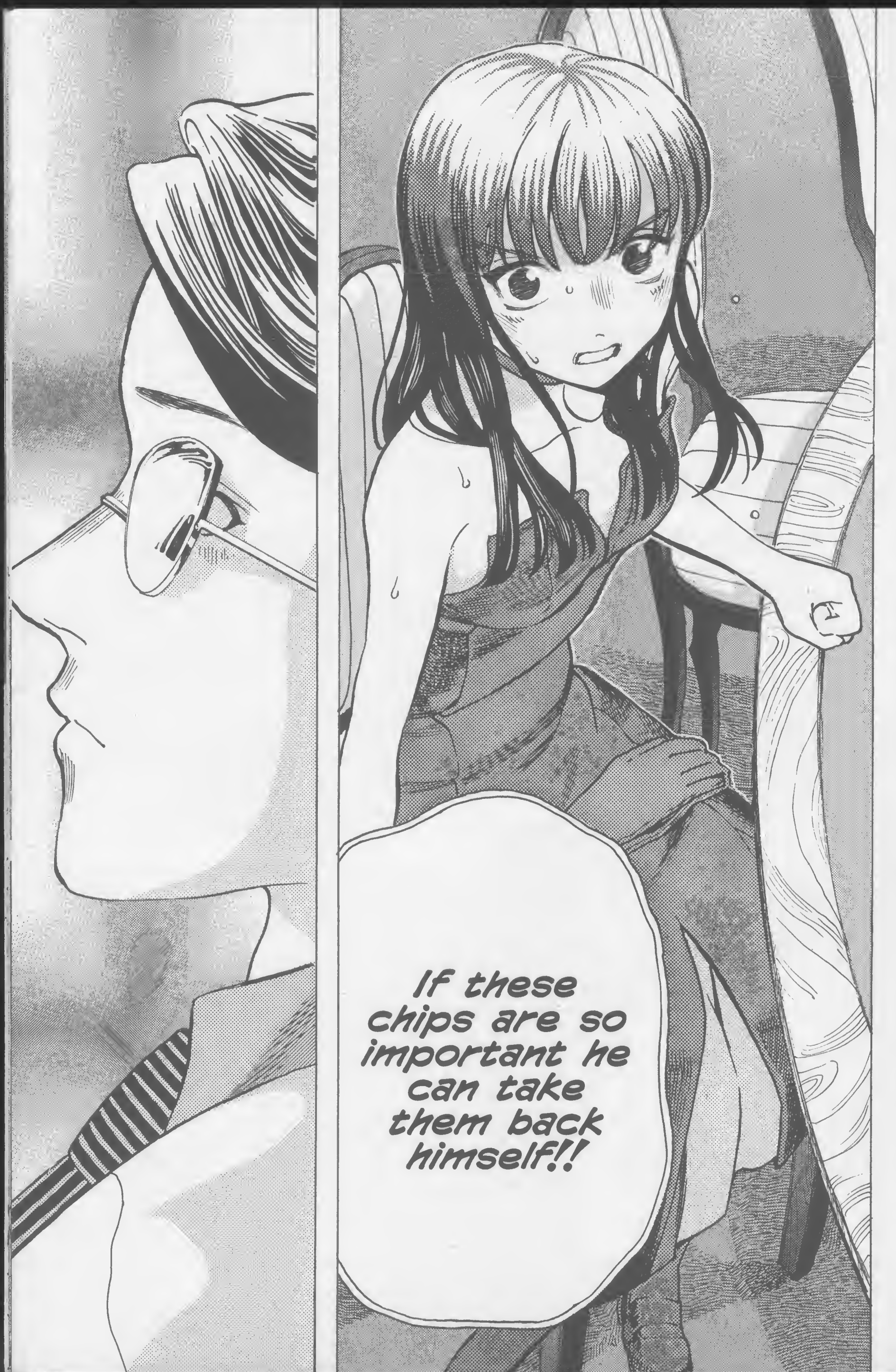

And I didn't expect to lose like this.
An Ace and Jack of spades! The strongest hand!
Without Even Money she would've lost!!

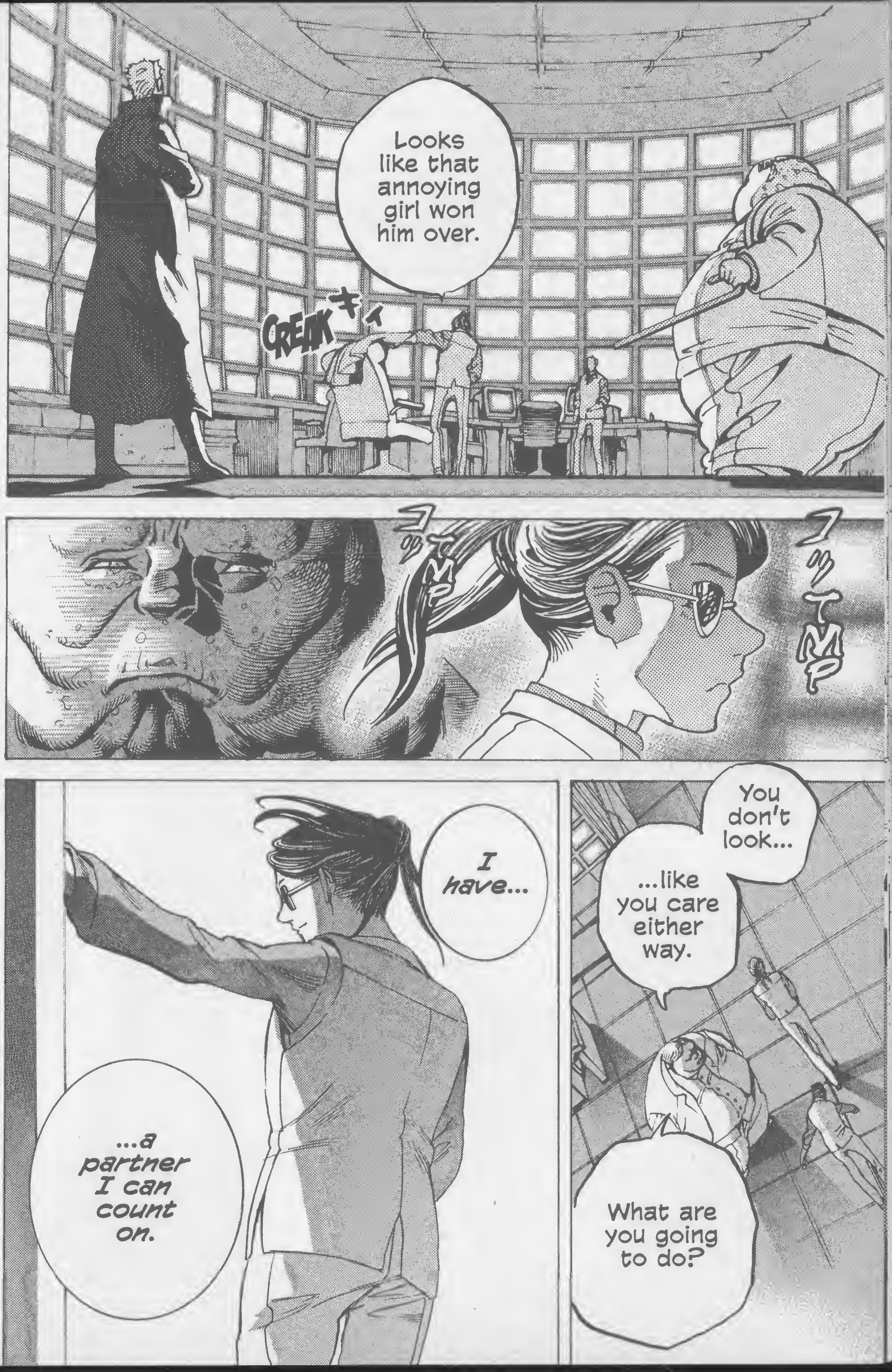

For the first time in my life...
...I've witnessed a complete victory.
Your complete victory.

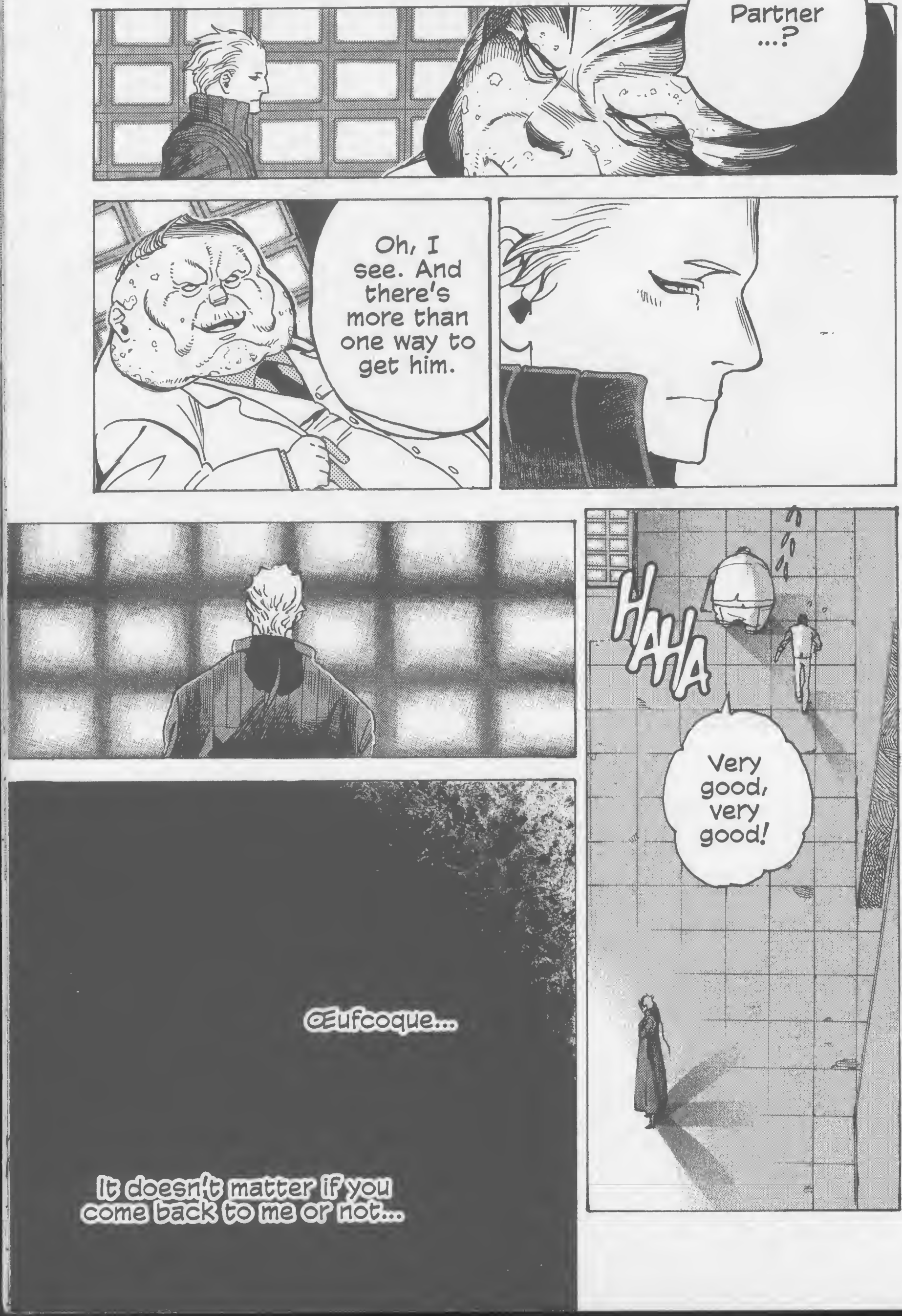

Here you are.
...
And one more.
ざわ...CHATTER
This one.

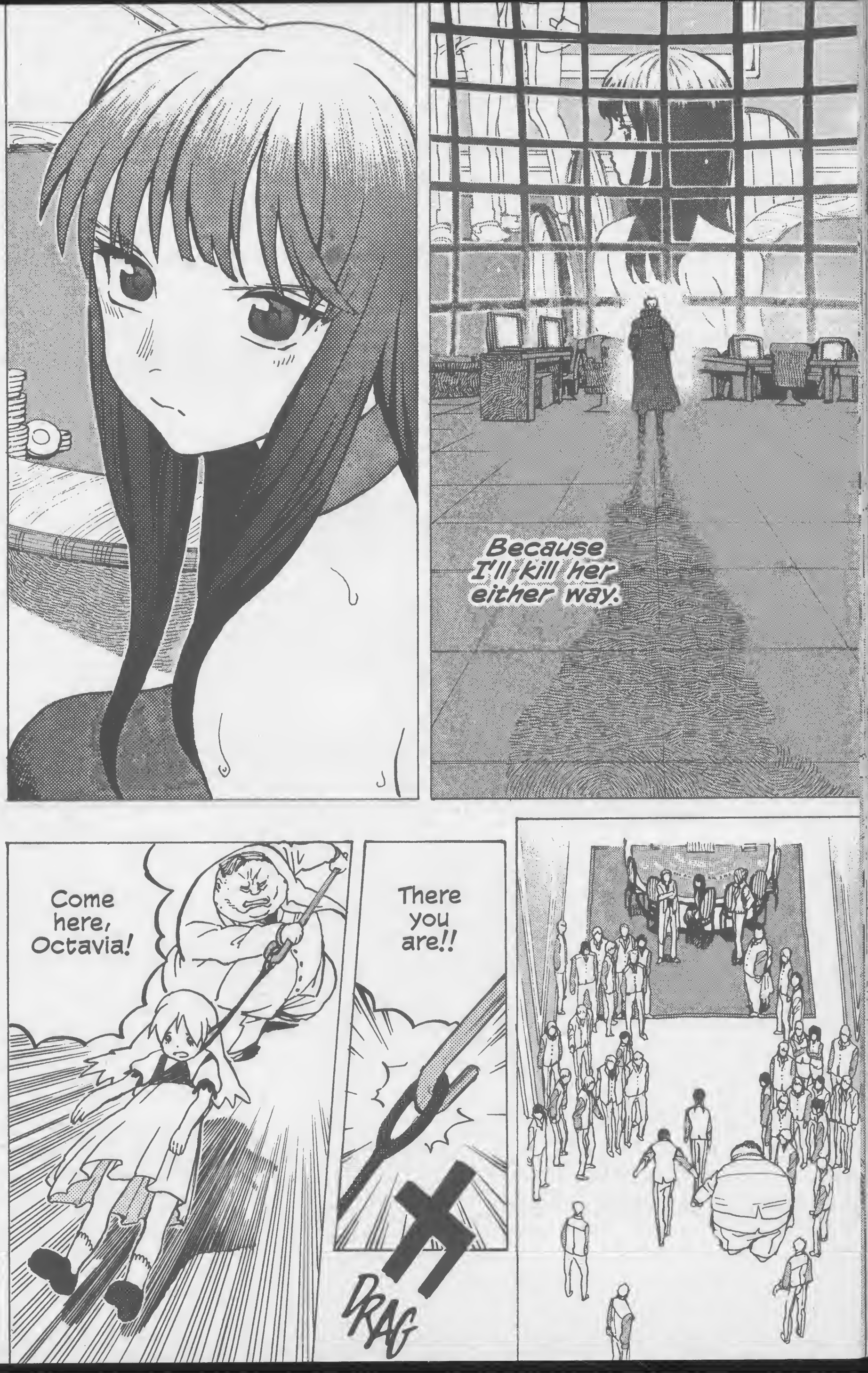

SLIP
We finally have all four chips!
Great job, Balot!!
...
...
SIGH
!!
Is the owner saying some-thing?
...!!

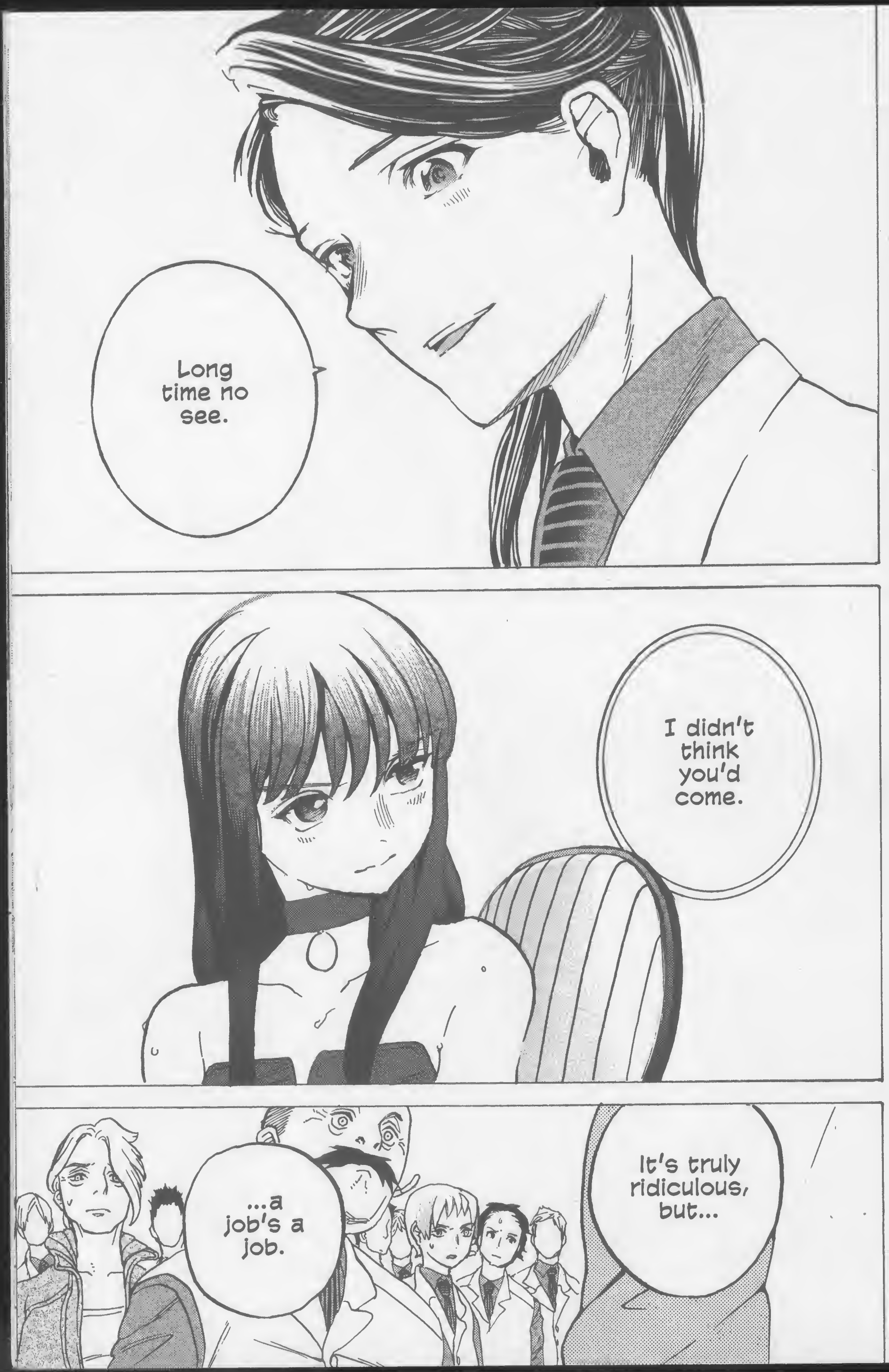

TAP TAP
...
If I don't stop you, they'll bring out the flamethrower.
Flame-thrower?
He'll be fired.
...
Call the owner down here.
...?!

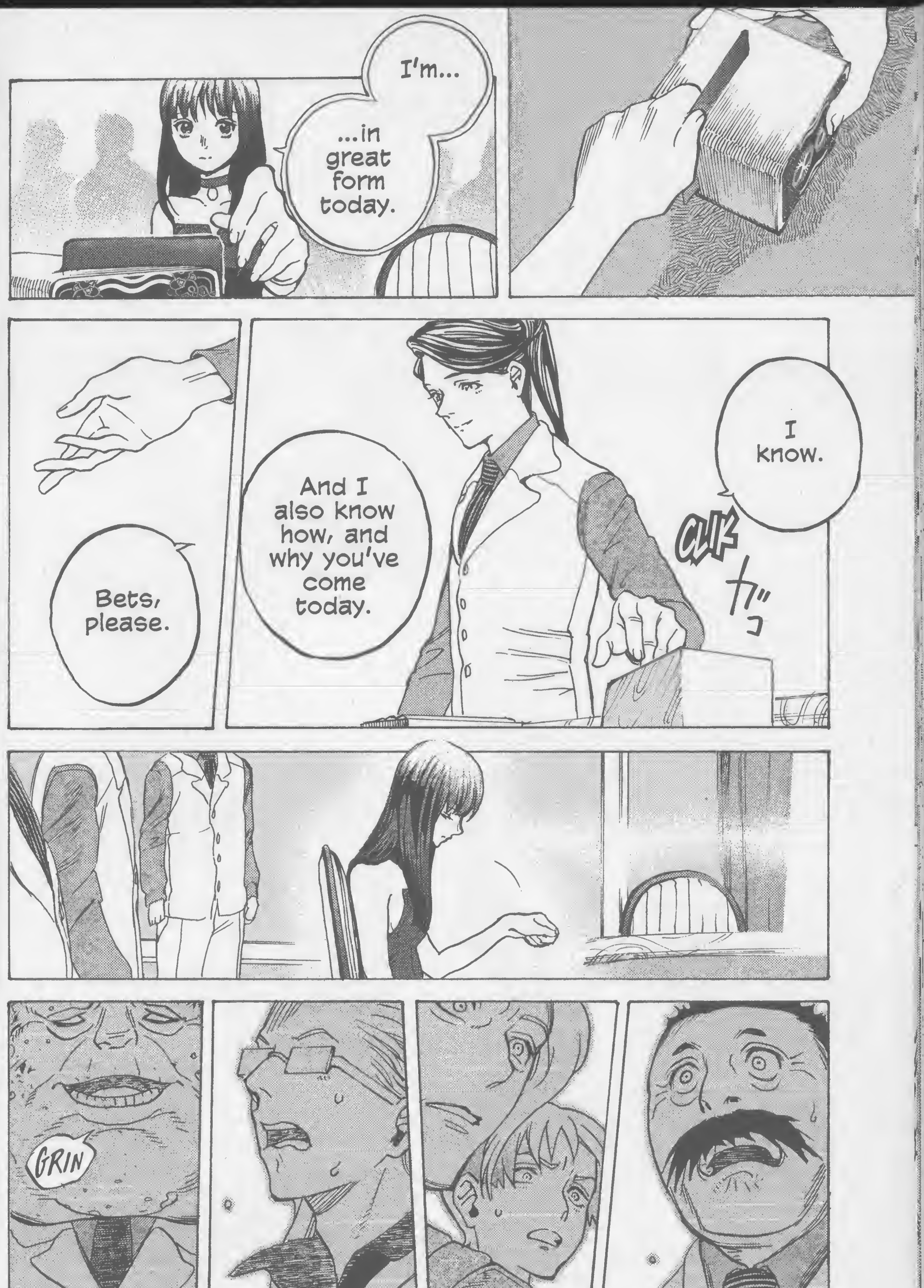

If these chips are so important he can take them back himself!!

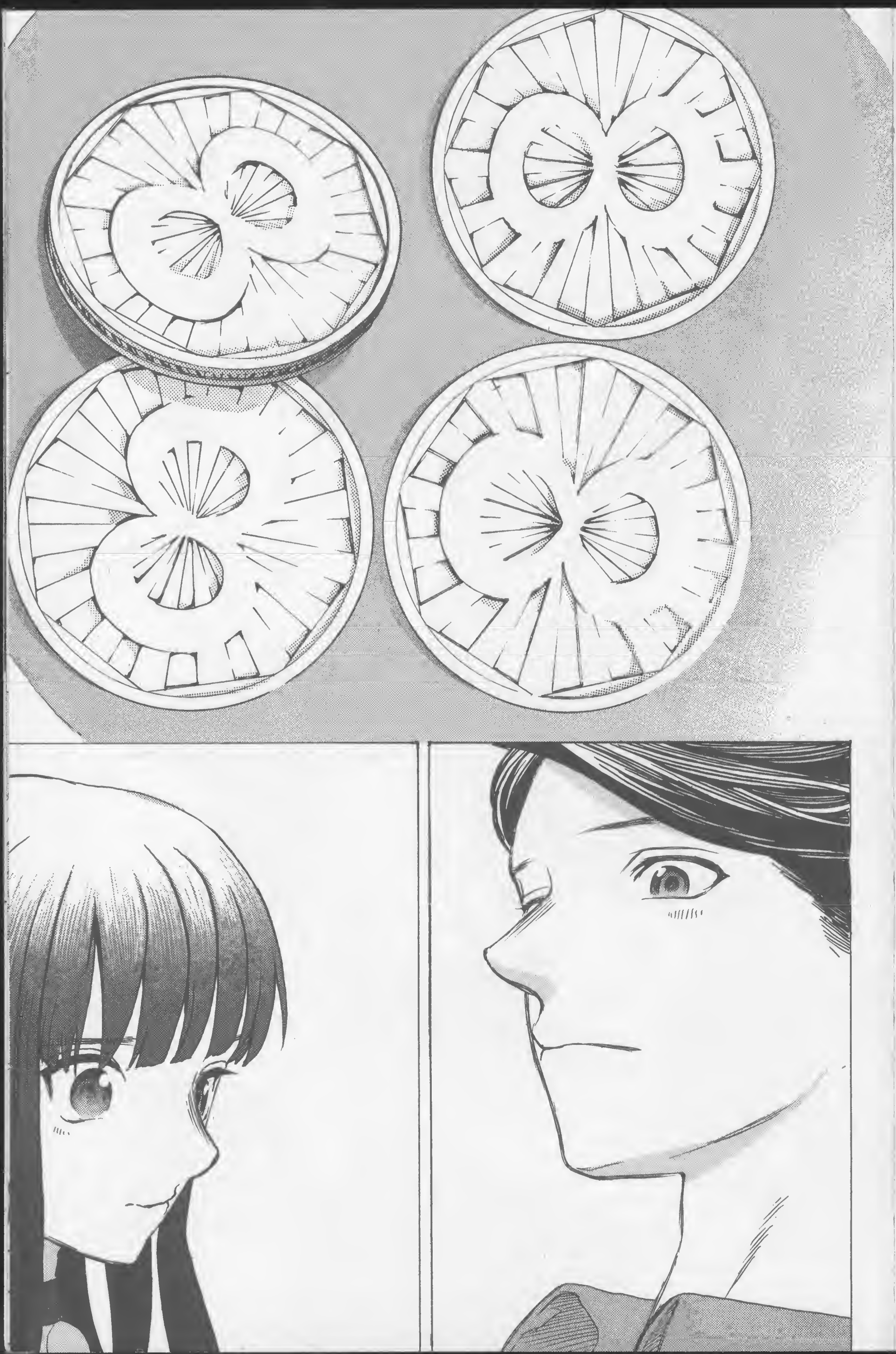

Looks like that annoying girl won him over.
CREAK キィ
フッ TMP
フッ TMP
You don't look...
...like you care either way.
What are you going to do?
I have...
...a partner I can count on.

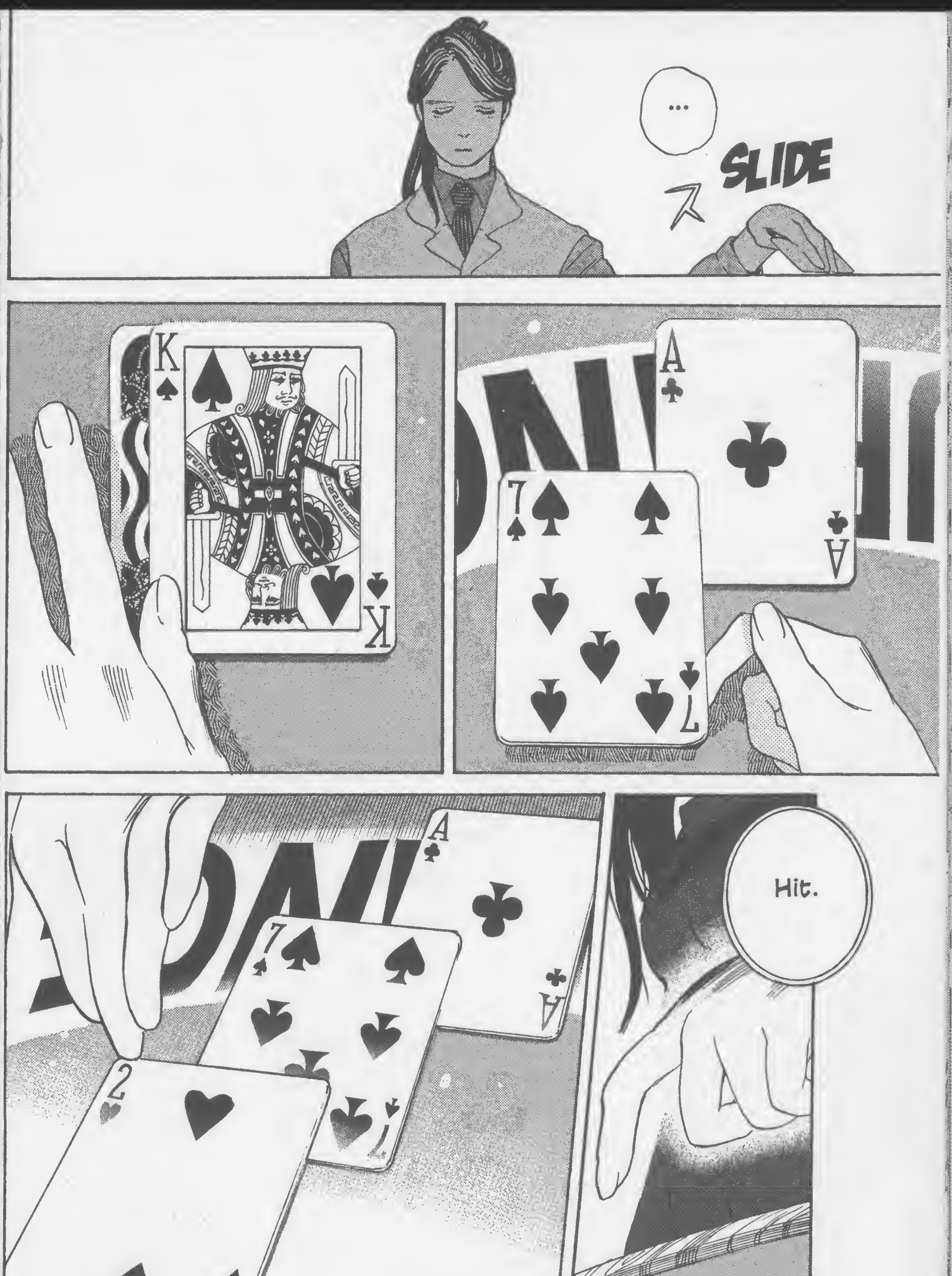

Partner ...?
Oh, I see. And there's more than one way to get him.
HAHA
Very good, very good!
Œufcoque...
It doesn't matter if you come back to me or not...

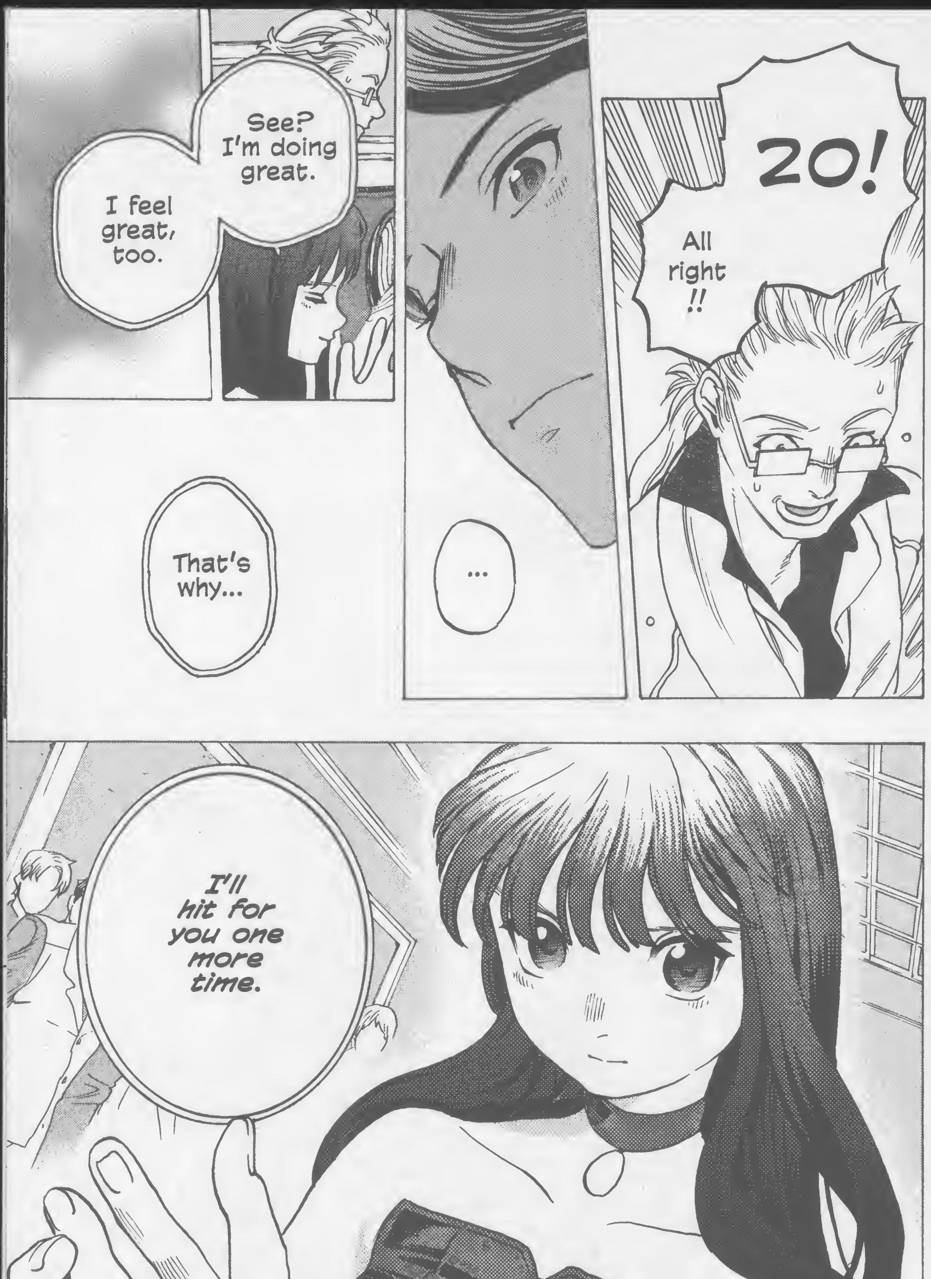

Because I'll kill her either way.
There you are!!
DRAG
Come here, Octavia!

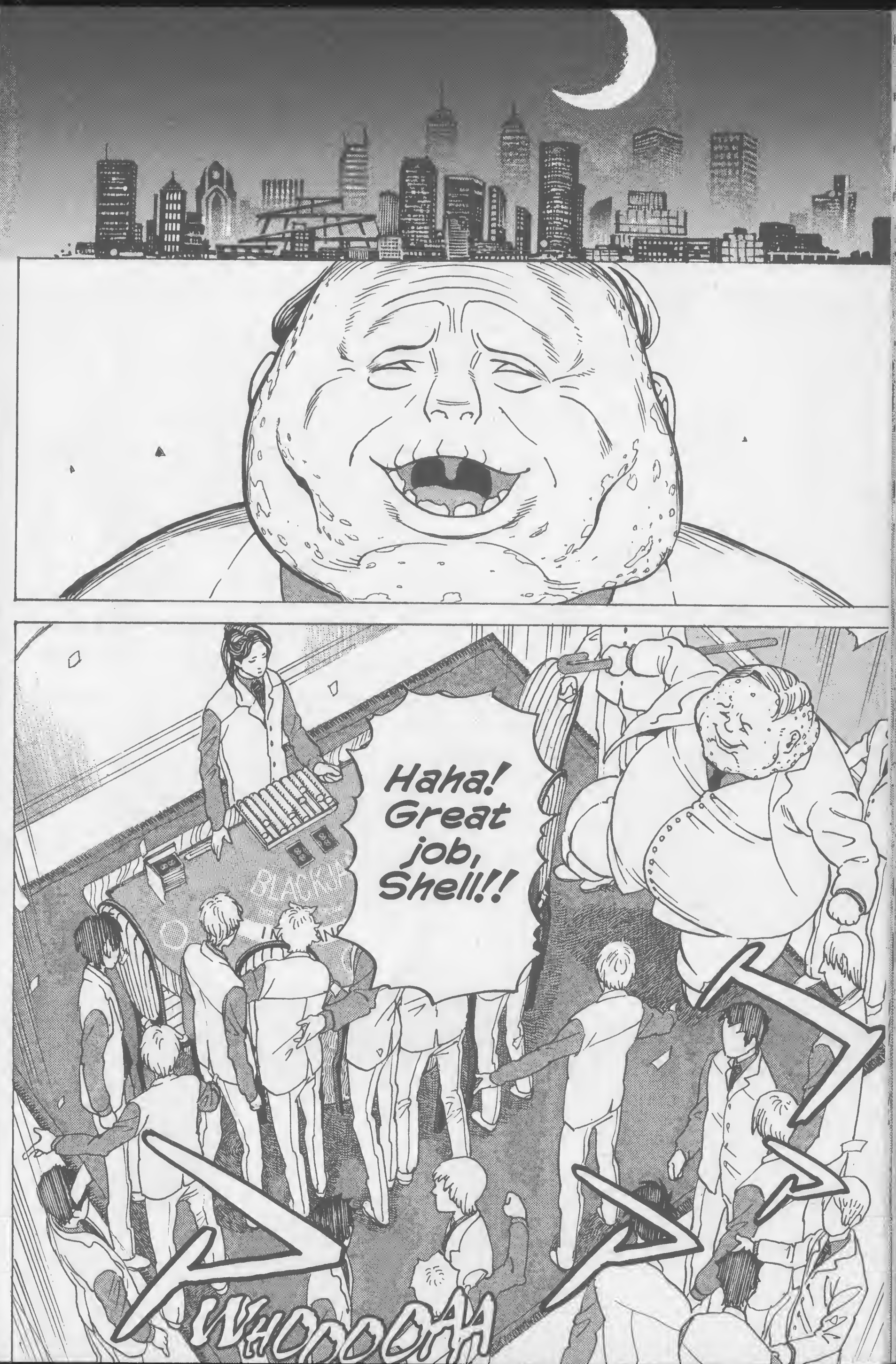

Long time no see.
I didn't think you'd come.
It's truly ridiculous, but...
...a job's a job.

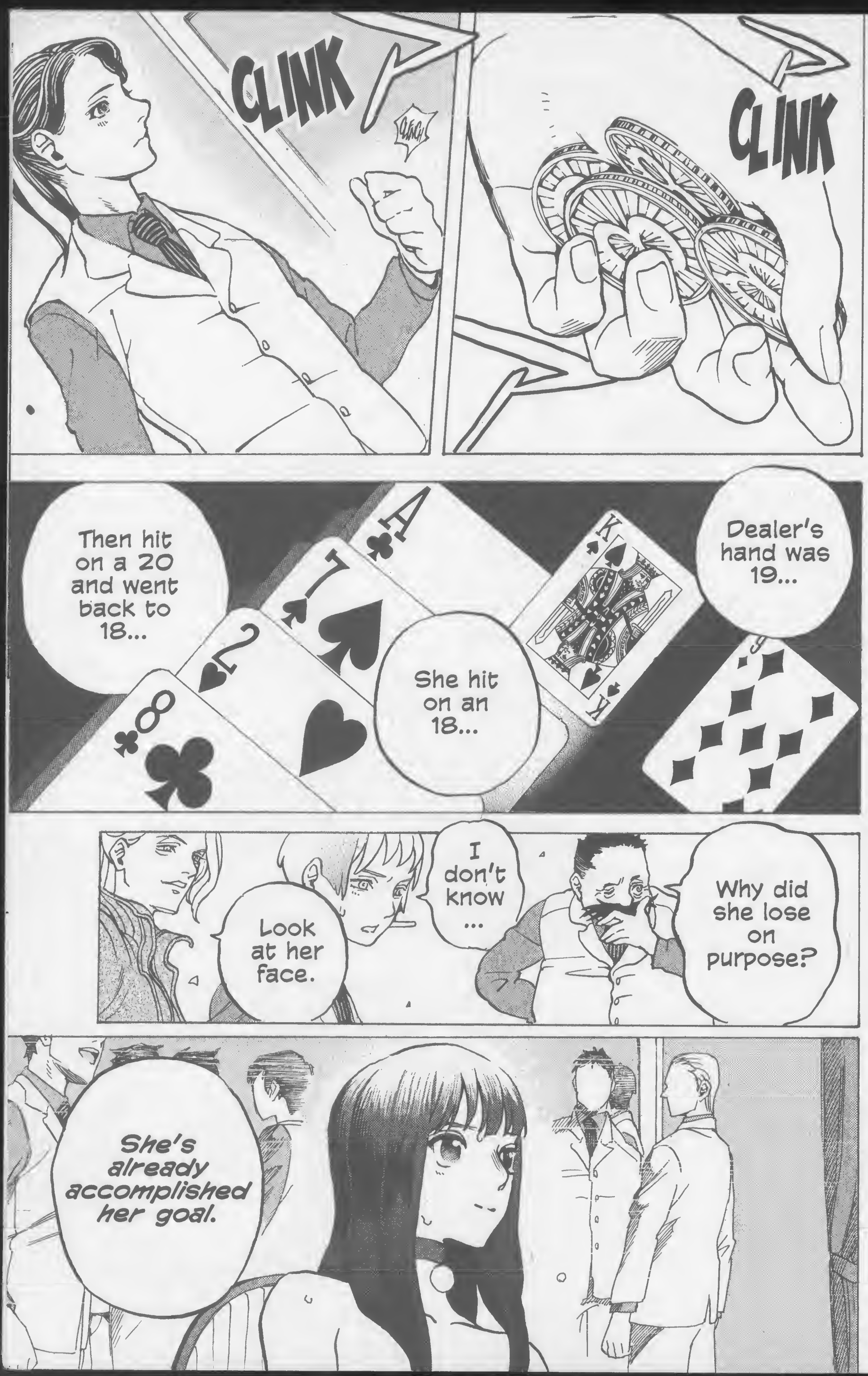

I'm...
...in great form today.
I know.
CLIK
ガッ
And I also know how, and why you've come today.
Bets, please.
GRIN

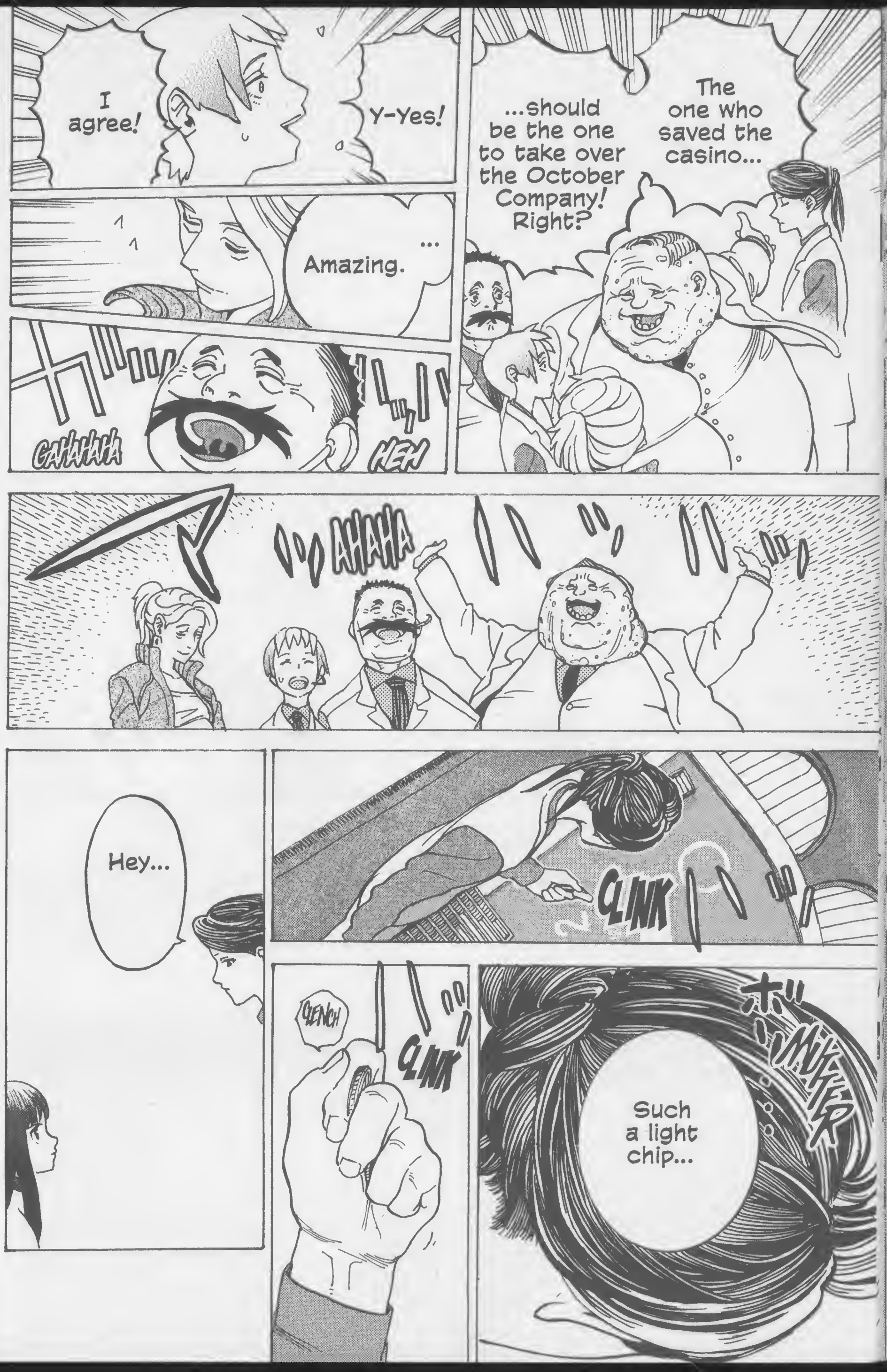


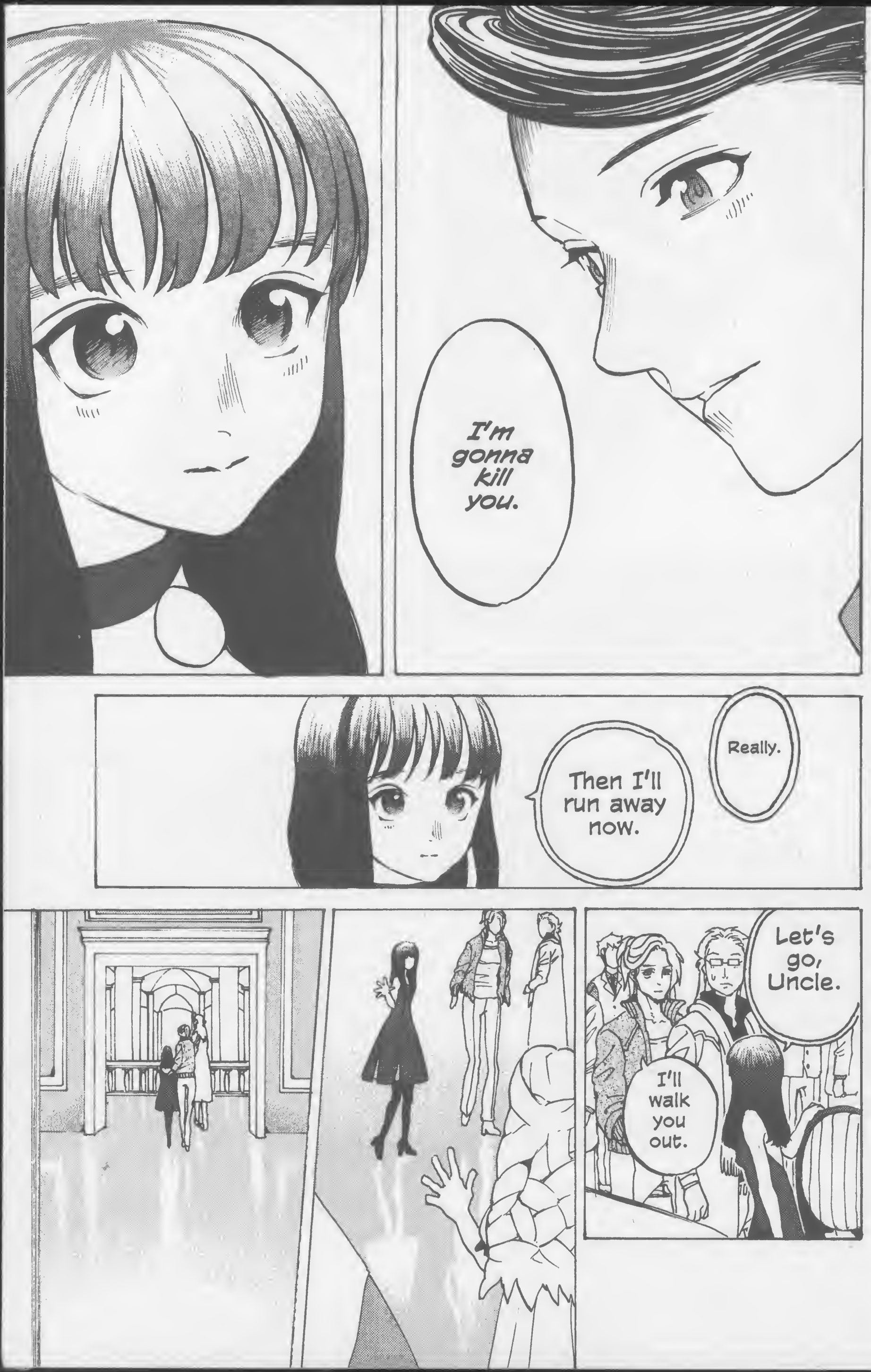

…
ス
SLIDE
Hit.


20!
All right !!
…
See? I'm doing great.
I feel great, too.
That's why...
I'll hit for you one more time.


Haha! Great job, Shell!!
WHOOOOAA


CLINK
CLINK
Dealer's hand was 19...
She hit on an 18...
Then hit on a 20 and went back to 18...
Why did she lose on purpose?
I don't know...
Look at her face.
She's already accomplished her goal.


The one who saved the casino...
...should be the one to take over the October Company! Right?
Y-Yes!
I agree!
...
Amazing.
HEH
GAHAHAHA
AHAHA
CLINK
Hey...
Such a light chip...
ボソ
MUTTER
CLINK
CLENCH


I'm gonna kill you.
Really.
Then I'll run away now.
Let's go, Uncle.
I'll walk you out.

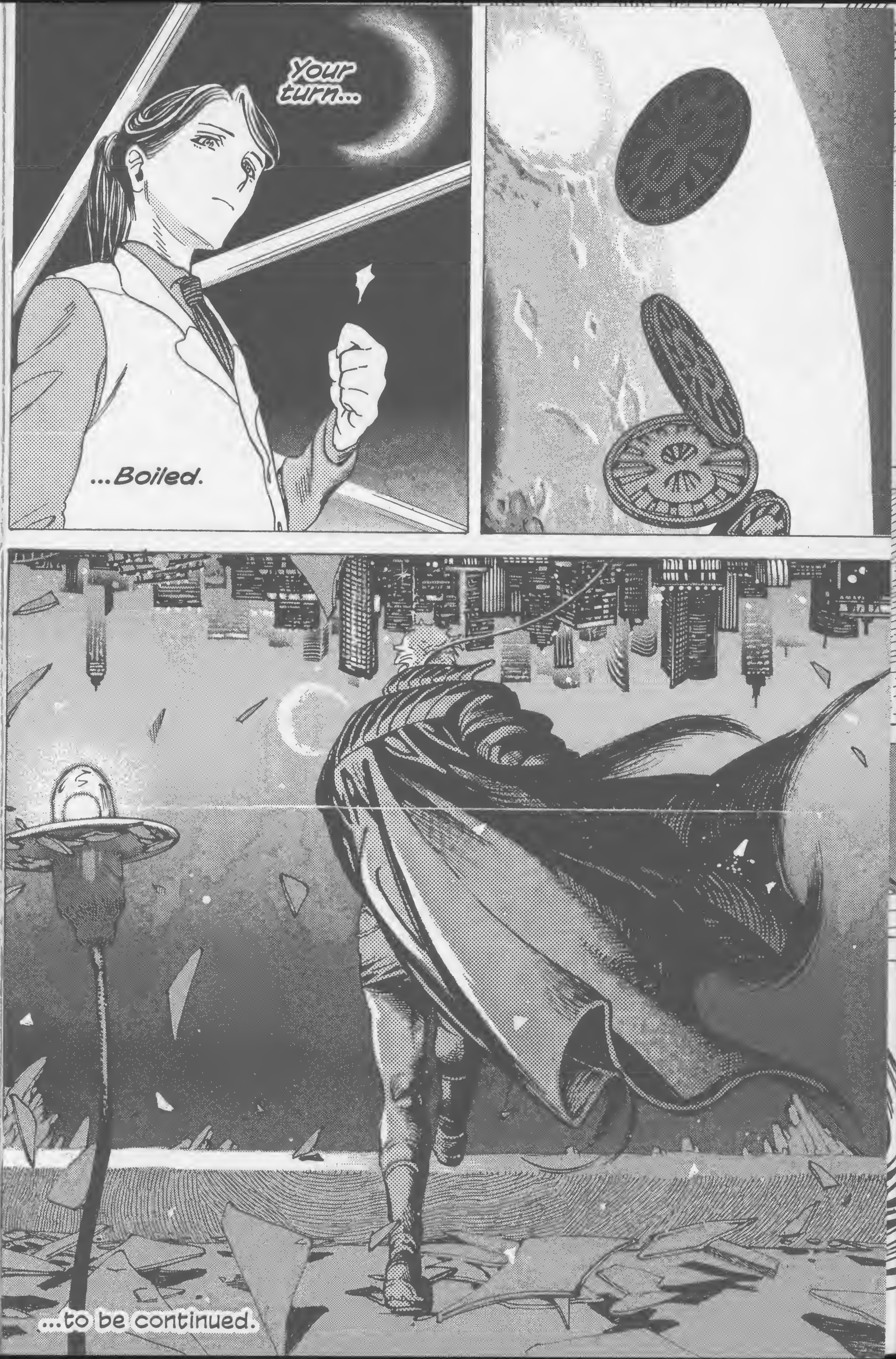
Authors' notes

The casino climax! The 6th volume is done perfectly in Oima's style. I have to tip my hat to the wonderful art. Things just keep getting better!

-Creator
Tow Ubukata

Volume 6! I've gone beyond the pain to a place of pleasure! Delicious!

-Manga adaptation
Yoshitoki Oima


Your turn...
...Boiled.
...to be continued.